



## The Last Tortilla & Other Stories

By Sergio Troncoso

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**The Last Tortilla & Other Stories** By Sergio Troncoso

- **Premio Aztlan Literary Prize** for the best book by a new Chicano writer
- **Southwest Book Award** from the Border Regional Library Association

**"She asked me if I liked them.** And what could I say? They were wonderful." From the very beginning of Sergio Troncoso's celebrated story "Angie Luna," we know we are in the hands of a gifted storyteller. Born of Mexican immigrants, raised in El Paso, and now living in New York City, Troncoso has a rare knack for celebrating life. Writing in a straightforward, light-handed style reminiscent of Grace Paley and Raymond Carver, he spins charming tales that reflect his experiences in two worlds. Troncoso's El Paso is a normal town where common people who happen to be Mexican eat, sleep, fall in love, and undergo epiphanies just like everyone else. His tales are coming-of-age stories from the Mexican-American border, stories of the working class, stories of those coping with the trials of growing old in a rapidly changing society. He also explores New York with vignettes of life in the big city, capturing its loneliness and danger. Beginning with Troncoso's widely acclaimed story "Angie Luna," the tale of a feverish love affair in which a young man rediscovers his Mexican heritage and learns how much love can hurt, these stories delve into the many dimensions of the human condition. We watch boys playing a game that begins innocently but takes a dangerous turn. We see an old Anglo woman befriend her Mexican gardener because both are lonely. We witness a man terrorized in his New York apartment, taking solace in memories of lost love. Two new stories will be welcomed by Troncoso's readers. "My Life in the City" relates a transplanted Texan's yearning for companionship in New York, while "The Last Tortilla" returns to the Southwest to explore family strains after a mother's death--and the secret behind that death. Each reflects an insight about the human heart that has already established the author's work in literary circles. Troncoso sets aside the polemics about social discomfort sometimes found in contemporary Chicano writing and focuses instead on the moral and intellectual lives of his characters. The twelve stories gathered here form a richly textured tapestry that adds to our understanding of what it is to be human.

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## The Last Tortilla & Other Stories By Sergio Troncoso Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"Okay, so I wasn't going to be a great poet or a legendary writer. I wouldn't lead revolutions, and I wouldn't compose extraordinary music. I was only a guy who had just found the world as it was, after throwing out thousands of years of dreams and nightmares to secure my fragile existence," confides the narrator in the final story of this earthy collection. He could speak for all the characters in these 12 stories of Mexican-American life just north of the border. Typical themes of love, death, coming-of-age and family life drive the narratives, but the El Paso setting lends them cultural depth. In "Punching Chickens," a teenage boy's first job is unloading chickens from trucks. At the end of the day he is bloodied and fatigued, but he is rewarded with the respect and camaraderie of his fellow workers, and the conviction that he will not quit or complain. A series of tales about older men and women explores their vulnerability, loneliness and faith in God as they near death, while other stories concentrate on young adults caught in the cultural gap between their Mexican heritage and American lives. The title story brings these themes together as a lonely widower remarries a woman his children despise. The grown children hold on to Mexican traditions as much as possible, but speak a mix of English and Spanish, while the youngest, 11-year-old Juanito, is confused by the actions of adults, including his stepmother's rationing of tortillas. The prose may be plain and unadorned, but these stories are richly satisfying. (Sept.)

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From Kirkus Reviews

paper 0-8165-1961-7 The Last Tortilla (\$40.00; paper \$17.95; Sept. 3; 240 pp.; 0-8165-1960-9; paper 0-8165-1961-7). A debut collection of 13 stories dealing with El Paso's often impoverished, invariably feisty Mexican-American populace. Troncoso's immensely lifelike characters include "Tuyi, the fat boy everybody ignored," in an unusually inventive coming-of-age tale ("The Snake"), an elderly grandmother ("The Abuelita"), whose undimmed zest for life implicitly rebukes her grandson's scholarly pessimism, and a college student aglow with memories of the older Mexican woman whose "unabashed Bohemian warmth" sweetly overpowered him. Though sometimes slightly overexplicit, Troncoso's wistful, endearingly romantic tales vividly dramatize the inherent richness of even subsistence-level lives. He's a respecter of persons, and in turn his characters earn your affection and respect. -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Review

"An earthy collection....These stories are richly satisfying."?

---*Publishers Weekly*

"Each story is an organic whole, full of characters who have lives as complete as the reader's....Enthusiastically recommended."

?---*Booklist*

"Troncoso really shines when he writes about El Paso and the life of Mexican-Americans there. He has the gift for writing from his heart outward into his reader's heart."?

---*Bloomsbury Review*

"Troncoso is a master storyteller....Readers' hearts will be touched by episodes of loss, tragedy, and love."?

---*Multicultural Review*

## **Winner of the 1999 *Premio Aztlan* for the best book by an emerging Chicano writer**

"These stories are richly satisfying."—*Publishers Weekly*

"Enthusiastically recommended."—*Booklist*

"Troncoso really shines when he writes about El Paso and the life of Mexican Americans there. He has the gift for writing from his heart outward into his reader's heart."—*Bloomsbury Review*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

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