

### Out of Grace: An unlikely journey through Guatemala's haunted highlands

Cynthia Renwick



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**Out of Grace: An unlikely journey through Guatemala's haunted highlands** Cynthia Renwick Guatemala City is officially classified as one of the most dangerous cities in the Americas, where armed guards stand in the doorway of every bank, shopping center, and McDonalds. Murders make daily headlines. The men hiss at women the same way they hiss at dogs. Here, in the shadow of the country's many spectacular volcanoes, a 22-year-old anthropologist embarks upon her Fulbright research, and quickly finds that things aren't quite what she expected. Even the folks at the U.S. Embassy want her to be afraid. She tries to ignore them, and travels to the Western Highlands to begin her fieldwork. But after a weekend climb of the Pacaya Volcano turns tragic, the author struggles to shake the helplessness and fear that haunt her. The last place she expects to find answers is in the bewildering town of San Pedro la Laguna, a mixed-up community of Mayan fishermen and law-breaking European expats. The town is a place where cultures collide, and is home to a thriving drug trade, strange secrets, deadly vendettas, and a north wind, the Xocomil, that is fabled to wake restless souls. This darkly adventurous personal narrative is at once an exploration of faith, a coming of age story and a reflection upon the haunting shadow of corruption and fear in a war-torn land.

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