

# The Child of the Atitecos: A Novel of Guatemala

*James Smurawa*

In suburban Chicago, David Emmanuelle lives the good life and knows it. After coming through J-school with the mentorship of Ricardo Arguello, one of the fourth estate's leading lights, he has landed one of the last good print reporting gigs. Pair that up with a beautiful, brilliant wife and their two happy, healthy kids, and there's nothing he wouldn't do to maintain his own personal status quo.

And yet. When he gets a lead for a real, meaty, Pulitzer-promising story in war-ravaged Guatemala, his mentor's birthplace, he starts packing his bags. He tells himself it's about the sweatshops, the women and children, the truth. He knows it's about proving himself to all the wrong people.

But in beautiful, hypnotic, addictive Guatemala, David finds himself the subject of a long con designed to unravel secrets of the atrocities of a civil war that has laid waste to its victims' families, villages, and perhaps, all vestiges of humanity. Now, deep in unfamiliar jungle, his own insecurities and inadequacies are laid plain against a swirl of suspicion, manipulation, and artifice. And for the first time, David realizes that he will not escape Guatemala as the man he knew himself to be. He may not escape at all.

Part James Rollins, part Richard Flanagan, this book is edge-of-your-seat plotting balanced with heady psychological narrative on the nature of atonement, revenge, and guilt. Through David's eyes we see the strange beauty of a place so bloodied, and the powerful resilience that such horrors breed. And in his story is exposed the cost of comfort, of willful ignorance, of the casual softness that has become the commercial narrative of American manhood.

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