



Rio Grande Fall

Rudolfo Anaya

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Everyone loves the Hot Air Balloon Fiesta de Albuquerque. The city's biggest moneymaker is more fun-filled and more profitable this year than ever. Until a body plummets from the sky. Four black feathers, Raven's calling cards, surround the body. Sonny recognizes the dead woman immediately. She is one of Raven's followers, and the state's prime witness against the cult member implicated in the murder of Sonny's cousin. The P.I. suspects that Raven is thirsting for revenge on all fronts. Indeed, death darkens the heavens again as a sniper's bullet fells another balloonist. Fearing bad publicity, the Fiesta makes Sonny an offer: a handsome reward if he can find the killer before the local police and the FBI. Tracking clues, Sonny soon discovers that a huge shipment of cocaine and heroin is to be unloaded in Albuquerque during the festival. Raven, he realizes, was sent in by the drug lords as a distraction. He is not through yet and must be stopped. But how? Raven possesses strengths no mortal can match; he can acquire the powers of his nagual, his animal spirit. Likewise, Sonny will need his own guardians, the coyotes, as well as a curandera, a healer, to guide him to Raven's lair. But no sooner is Sonny ready to face his enemy than calamity strikes. Someone near and dear to him falls into Raven's clutches, possibly lost forever. With the newfound force of the coyote spirit coursing through his veins, Sonny sets off, ready to risk his life for the fate of the city - and the survival of one he loves...

Rio Grande Fall Details

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Author : Rudolfo Anaya

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From Reader Review Rio Grande Fall for online ebook

Laurie Stoll says

When I read the jacket of this story it grabbed my attention. Since this hard back edition was only .49 I bought it. What I failed to notice in small print at the top of the inside jacket were the words - Chicano Literature.

This story is generously sprinkled with Spanish words. Since I don't read or speak Spanish it was very frustrating trying to read this story.

EDLundy-Veo says

A PI in the midst of the internationally famous Albuquerque Hot Air Balloon Fiesta.

Jamie Barringer (Ravenmount) says

I really enjoyed reading a fantasy book with magic and traditions from my own part of the world. For folks who believe in the mystical traditions described in this book, I suppose it may not be fantasy, but the same can be said for Celtic magic in books based on those traditions.

Theresa says

Rudolfo Anaya is an amazing author, the descriptions in this book reminded me so much of my great grandparents who lived in Albuquerque, where the drama unfolds. There is so much culture, history and social issues that keeps this book so interesting, I highly recommend it!

Amy says

The 2nd book in the series, this book follows Sonny as he investigates a major drug deal taking place at the Hot Air Balloon Fiesta.

Monty says

I am definitely hooked on the Sonny Baca series (there are four, and this one is the second). Rio Grande Fall picked up where the Zia Summer left off, and the way it doesn't end, there's no way for me to stop here. The setting is in the fall during hot air balloon festivities and includes a harried balloon ride. There is much intrigue and mystery as to who are the good and bad guys. Raven, Sonny's nemesis, is around though not too prominent, and there is a hint that he will be more present in the next book (Shaman Winter). The spiritual world of brujo's, animal spirit guides, and other aspects of the New Mexican metaphysical realm are woven

into this book. This is definitely a series to read in order.

Ellen says

I had hopes for this book because I enjoyed "Bless Me Ultima," but the good plot was marred by having the protagonist rush blindly into dangerous situations where he escapes or is rescued at the last possible moment.

Rusty says

Having spent time in New Mexico, I am probably inclined to like a mystery written by a new author (to me) set in that state. Love the Spanish phrases, the references to New Mexican food (which I adore), and the cultural background that flows through the novel. A private detective known as Sonny Baca finds himself searching for a murderer after a woman he knows is thrown from a balloon. Another murder and it becomes obvious that drugs are involved due to be delivered during the famous Albuquerque Balloon Festival (a marvel if you've never seen it). Lots of action, interaction with the spirit world and natives, both good and bad, speeds the reader to an unexpected conclusion. While I was able to discern who one of the major culprits was, others in the tale were not so obvious. Quite a good mystery for mystery lovers!

Dj says

I didn't want to even give one star. I am from Albuquerque and thought I'd read this because that's where it takes place. However, it is so farfetched I could not bring myself to finish it. I had only 100 pages to finish but just couldn't bare it any longer. Sonny gets himself in ridiculously dangerous situations and miraculously gets out way too many times and then there's the whole science fiction aspect of him feeling "connected" to wolves and the villain "connected" to ravens and supposedly being able to become one. This is simply not my genre at all.

Ryan Hartman says

I've read just about every Anaya book. This was my least favorite

E. Darlene says

The second in the Sonny Baca series. Loved reading it.

Luke says

The plot in this one was pretty clunky. Favorite parts: Landscape descriptions of New Mexico. Least favorite parts: False dichotomy of modern/antiquated to unnatural/natural.

Justin says

2.5 Stars. Not impressed by the plot, or the characters. The description of NM in autumn was nice, but I live here and don't need the travelogue. Suffice it to say I'm not the audience for Anaya's mysteries.

Book Concierge says

Book two in the Sonny Baca mystery series is set during the Albuquerque NM Hot Air Balloon Fiesta. It's set to be the biggest moneymaker for the city, until a body plummets from a gondola. Was it a tragic accident, or was the woman murdered?

There's a lot going on here. We have the aftermath of book one's mystery; the woman who falls from the balloon is a key witness in that case. There's an effort to bring in a major drug shipment, using the Balloon Fiesta as cover. Sonny has found a homeless family that he's trying to help. His mother wants him to forget this investigation business and settle down with Rita, a very good woman. It's Rita who takes Sonny to Lorenza, a curandera who will perform a *limpieza* - a cleansing ceremony - to help Sonny dispel the trauma of his past encounter with Raven.

Sonny is in touch with his spirit nagual - the coyote, but is he really a brujo? Can he fly? And can he go up against Raven, who is definitely an evil brujo who has slipped through the various efforts to capture him.

I like magical realism, in general, but this series has gone too far. I read mysteries for the plot, the action, the fast-paced story. This book failed to deliver that. It lacked focus for me and the fact that it took me a week to read it, is reflective of that. I just wasn't interested.

Amber Foxx says

The second Sonny Baca novel is not just a sequel, but a continuation of a journey through the four seasons and the four sacred directions that began in book one, *Zia Summer*. Sonny, the great-grandson of legendary New Mexico lawman Elfecho Baca, grows as heir to his bisabuelo's role and also in his spirituality and capacity for love.

To recover from the soul sickness caused by a murder he dealt with in the first book, Sonny seeks healing from a curandera. The healing is his initiation into the spirit world and shamanic experiences, and it introduces the most compelling aspects of the story.

This private investigator character far from noir. Sonny is colorful, a flawed but basically virtuous young man strongly connected to his family, culture, and community. He's realistic in many ways and yet also a larger-than-life hero who has mythic-scale adventures in his archetypal battle with Raven, the cult leader and domestic terrorist he pursued in the first book.

Sonny is hired by the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta when a balloonist who could have been a witness in a case involving Raven dies. (Get use to that extra r in Albuquerque as you read the series. It's not a typo. Anaya restored it, though it fell off the city's name a long time ago.) An intriguing aspect of the crime plot is the time period, in the aftermath of the Iran-Contra scandal and the arms-and-drugs deals of that era. One of the themes is corruption.

The balloon fiesta itself, the city's diverse neighborhoods, and the glory of October in New Mexico, are as central to the story as the characters. The author is so passionate about them he gets carried away sometimes, re-describing them more often than necessary. He also restates his themes a bit too often. I guess his editor didn't dare tell the master cut, but these repetitions slow the pace. A reflection on autumn in the Rio Grande valley isn't needed when lives are at stake. The book overall is still powerful. I mean this as praise when I say it has an occasional comic book quality—a fight scene with a leap off a balcony, a mad scientist scene, the invocation of special powers—because myths, archetypes, and superheroes are closely related. The most complex characters aren't the good ones or the evil ones, but two women who are torn between: Madge, the balloon fiesta director, and Tamara, Raven's former follower. The Good Women aren't filled out as well. Though their roles in Sonny's life differ, his lover, Rita, restaurateur and herbalist, and the curandera, Lorenza, are virtually identical. This may be due to Sonny's idealization of them—or the author's. Lorenza is Sony's new spiritual teacher. His neighbor don Eliseo, a traditional elder, was his teacher in the first book and remains one in this. I'll be interested to see if each book in the series adds another teacher and how these teachers balance his spiritual wholeness by the end. Despite some excess verbiage, I'll follow the rest of the series. After all, it's excess verbiage by Anaya.
