



El Sicario: The Autobiography of a Mexican Assassin

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In this unprecedented and chilling monologue, a repentant Mexican hitman tells the unvarnished truth about the war on drugs on the American. El Sicario is the hidden face of America's war on drugs. He is a contract killer who functioned as a commandante in the Chihuahuan State police, who was trained in the US by the FBI, and who for twenty years kidnapped, tortured and murdered people for the drug industry at the behest of Mexican drug cartels. He is a hit man who came off the killing fields alive. He left the business and turned to Christ. And then he decided to tell the story of his life and work. Charles Bowden first encountered El Sicario while reporting for the book "Murder City". As trust between the two men developed, Bowden bore witness to the Sicario's unfolding confession, and decided to tell his story. The well-spoken man that emerges from the pages of *El Sicario* is one who has been groomed by poverty and driven by a refusal to be one more statistic in the failure of Mexico. He is not boastful, he claims no major standing in organized crime. But he can explain in detail not only torture and murder, but how power is distributed and used in the arrangement between the public Mexican state and law enforcement on the ground - where terror and slaughter are simply tools in implementing policy for both the police and the cartels. And he is not an outlaw or a rebel. He is the state. When he headed the state police anti-kidnapping squad in Juarez, he was also running a kidnapping ring in Juarez. When he was killing people for money in Juarez, he was sharpening his marksmanship at the Federal Police range. Now he lives in the United States as a fugitive. One cartel has a quarter million dollar contract on his head. Another cartel is trying to recruit him. He speaks as a free man and of his own free will - there are no charges against him. He is a lonely voice - no one with his background has ever come forward and talked. He is the future - there are thousands of men like him in Mexico and there will be more in other places. He is the truth no one wants to hear.

El Sicario: The Autobiography of a Mexican Assassin Details

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From Reader Review El Sicario: The Autobiography of a Mexican Assassin for online ebook

Manfred says

Having lived in Mexico, been robbed in Mexico, and been kidnapped in Mexico - there isn't anything in this book I don't believe. This is a simple retelling of an underworld life from the viewpoint of a hired murderer. It could've used better editing but the matter-of-fact narrative is mostly effective. Like Bowden says, "There are things no one wants to know. And there are lies everyone wants to hear." This book discusses most of these things and lies as they relate to the cartels and the culture of murder and money that has infested Mexico to the highest levels of authority. The protagonist remains one-dimensional throughout the book but there probably wasn't much else that could be done with an anonymous killer.

Pickle Farmer says

Dark shit

Stephen says

I picked up this book for a short read on a subject that interests me -- and in that regard, the book fulfilled the objective. However, if you are hoping for quality investigative journalism, you will be profoundly disappointed -- the sicario's personal story does not ring true and has all of the hallmarks of an imposter.

By saying that I do not believe his story, I am not saying that I don't believe in the real-life kidnappings that undoubtedly occur many times daily, the brutal executions carried out by drug-addled assassins aided by local police, the untold number of unmarked graves throughout Mexico, or even the massive corruption that infects every level of Mexican government allowing narco-terrorism to flourish. I have no reason to doubt the veracity of this nightmare-fuel which any person who follows the news could fail to notice. No, the story of the "sicario" has all the trappings of someone who DID follow this saga closely, and may have even lived amid the hot, flying lead.

But there's nothing in the uninterrupted, rambling, sometimes-repetitive narrative of the "sicario" that jumps out as something only a contract-killer would or could know. The editors' whole premise of letting the subject speak incessantly for hours on-end is completely antithetical to the idea of in-depth reporting. Probing questions should have been asked before he moved on to a different subject; the "sicario" should have been pressed for more details on specific events, places and times. Are the crude drawings peppered throughout the book supposed to lend credence to his tale? Are they supposed to even be informative or illuminating? If this guy really was some kind of super-killer in charge of planning kidnappings and executions, his team members must've been mind readers because his diagramming skills are complete garbage.

If his story is to be believed, the reader should be provided with the details which make the story believable. It is not enough to take the editors' word for it -- which is explicitly what Bowden asks us to do. The best assurance offered to the reader that the "sicario" is authentic is essentially: a guy that I can vouch for knows a guy who can vouch for another guy that can vouch for this guy. Okey-dokey.

While the absence of verifiable details and the melodramatic assassin-turned-weeping-Christian tale had me skeptical, there was one anecdote that pushed me over the edge. In his escape from his life as a hired killer, he reaches out to a man that was once (and presumably still is) an assassination target of a drug cartel due to his owing them \$1.5M. The "sicario" tells us that he was once ordered to execute this man, but was never able to track him down even after making multiple attempts. But during his divinely-guided escape, he opens the phone book, calls the man's office, tells him he's coming to meet him, and then strolls right into his office to meet him face-to-face. Hmmm. What are we to make of this? Obviously, if cartel assassins just knew how to use the yellow pages they could stop futzing about with elaborate surveillance and kidnapping plans and just ring targets up by pretending to sell them the premium and sports cable package.

But why would someone pretend to be someone they're not? The editors assure us that he is not seeking fame -- after all, he veils himself on camera and there are people that would kill him if they could find him. Sometimes all an impostor wants is to feel like the center of attention, tell people a story, and have them hang on their every word. Oh, and one last thing: "He was paid for these interviews."

AleJandra says

"The sicario takes us to the real Latin America, not a place of magical realism, but a place of murderous realism."

Me gusto el libro, odie la historia que cuenta.

Siempre lo he dicho, si quieren leer gore o crueldad, no es necesario buscar en la ficción, léanse un libro con relatos de la realidad del narcotráfico y estos si que te enchinan la piel.

La estructura de la historia en si es muy mala, la narrativa y traducción nos quedan debiendo. Como libro solo merecería 2 estrellas. Pero hay que reconocer el valor de ambos autores y del mismo Sicario, para atreverse a hacer publica esta historia, especialmente si tenemos en cuenta lo mucho que se señala la culpa del gobierno mexicano.

"What is increasingly clear is that if this is a war, it is being waged, at least in part, by powerful forces of the Mexican government against poor and marginalized sectors of the Mexican people."

Al principio tenemos 50 paginas de pura presentación, si no conoces nada de el narcotráfico en México si te ayuda a entender el contexto de la historia, pero si como yo ya sabes bien como es eso la verdad esas paginas son de lo mas tediosas.

Cuando llega el momento de conocer el Sicario, toda la historia te envuelve, y te mete de lleno a ese mundo, el protagonista divide sus anécdotas en niñez, adolescencia, hombre, e hijo de dios.

La niñez: Nada fuera de lo común, es triste si, pero no es taaaan malo como yo esperaba. Viene de una familia de bajos recursos, pero nunca le faltó amor o comida.

La adolescencia: El protagonista es ingenuo pero también vale madrista. Sabe que lo que hace esta mal, pero lo hace porque le vale. Hasta cierto punto entendí las malas decisiones que tomo, porque cuando

tenemos esa edad todos, y digo todos hicimos muchas estupideces, obviamente a el le presentan la oportunidad de trabajar para el narcotráfico de una forma sencilla y la toma.

Hombre-Sicario: Aquí viene uno de mis grande problemas con la historia. A mi lo que mas curiosidad me daba y lo que realmente quería saber, a detalle, es ese momento exacto en el que el protagonista decide matar a alguien, el que sintió o como fue ese preciso momento en el que pierde su alma por dinero.

Pero no lo vemos a claridad.

El protagonista tiene una intervención con sus hermanos, lo cual no termine de entender bien. Los hermanos lo culpa a el por la enfermedad de la mama, le dicen que ya no le pagaran la universidad y le dan un ultimátum. El prota decide abandonar la universidad y se mete a la academia de policía.

En un principio yo creí que lo estaba haciendo para reformarse y ayudar a su mama, pero NO. En realidad el entra a la policía con en el único motivo de seguir trabajando para el narco.

Ya había escuchado esto en documentales, que los narcos reclutan a ex soldaos, o ex policías. Pero aquí nos muestra que va mas allá, que el narco manda a su gente a que los entrenen. El prota esta estudiando en la academia de día y en la noche se va de fiesta con los narcos, y recibe muy buen dinero, en ese momento el no hace ningún trabajo para el cartel, simplemente ayudarlos a reclutar mas gente de la policía.

Que esperanza tenemos si en realidad estamos pagando con nuestros impuestos el entrenamiento de personas que vana a huzar esos conocimientos para matarnos????

El protagonista se gradúa de la academia de policía, no nos cuenta bien que pasa después simplemente se salta a contarnos cuando el ya es parte de este Súper Equipo de matones. Y se toma su tiempo explicándonos y PRESUMIENDONOS lo bien que realizaban sus trabajos, y lo fregoncísimo que era ese grupo.

Describe a detalle métodos de tortura, formas de matar a alguien y demás cosas que le pagan por hacer y que el simplemente hacia porque seguía ordenes.

Hijo de Dios: Al Final este tipejo se arrepiente y se vuelve Cristiano.

No le creí lo del cambio, ni siquiera entendemos bien como se da dichoso cambio. Un día decide dejar de drogarse y emborracharse. Por qué? Quien sabe nada mas por que si. Curiosamente a pesar de llevar años consumiendo droga de manera excesiva, la deja así de un día para otro. Pero aunque deja sus vicios, no deja de matar.

Por eso no le creo su dichosa redención, porque lo que lo llevo a dejar el narco fue su orgullo. Porque al dejar de húsar drogas, su jefe ya no confía en el y lo manda a hacer trabajos que según el sicario "Ya no eran de su altura".

Este tipo me viene a decir que esta arrepentido de lo que hizo, que a resucitado en Jesucristo, pero habla de ser Sicario como si se enorgulleciera de eso, constantemente repite que los sicarios de ahora solo son imitadores, que el si era un Sicario de verdad. Hijo de puta, matar es matar, ser mejor como asesino no es algo que deberías estar presumiendo, especialmente si según tu estas arrepentido de ello.

A pero eso si el nos cuenta lo feliz que es por haber renacido en Jesucristo. Por un lado esta bien que la religión o su fe, ayude a personas a cambiar su vida para bien. Un sicario menos en la calle es una gran ganancia para la sociedad. Pero tampoco intentes decirme que ahora ya eres bueno y que cuando mueras iras al cielo. Como si todo el dolor que causaste y que sigues causando porque muchas de las familias de sus

victimas nunca encontraran paz, a pero eso si este cabron ya vive feliz.

Otra cosa que no nos cuenta y me hubiera encantado saber es la historia de las mujeres en su vida, es muy poco lo que sabemos de sus esposas. Nos cuenta lo mucho que disfrutaba las fiestas con prostitutas en varias veces de la historia, pero no nos especifica como conoció a sus esposas, tampoco nos cuenta bien que paso con su familia.

En conclusión: Lloro por México, por la realidad que se vive, por las victimas de esta guerra de ambición. Y rezo, de verdad rezo para que pronto se termine este infierno, o con que disminuya un poco, aunque sea un poquito.

Comentario estúpido del día: Cuando muera voy a ir al cielo porque obviamente soy una buena persona. Pero si cuando llegue me encuentro en el cielo a uno de estos sicarios arrepentidos o a Luna Bella, me voy a enojar mucho con Dios.

Megan says

Terrible and fascinating.

Billy says

A dog's breakfast of a supposedly two-day long confessional by a former cartel hitman (sicario) as part of a documentary film. The title says autobiography, but it is most certainly not that, though there are biographical elements. The book supposedly has two editors, but in the introduction they take great pride in saying that the pages to follow are raw, elemental, the untouched story of a killer who got out of the game. Well, in truth, because of the lack of editing, the story grows repetitious quickly. How many times can a guy repeat that the cartels are placing recruits in army training for their own purposes? Apparently, every fifth page or so.

There are also drawings by the ex-sicario that frankly add nothing to the understanding. And they appear about every fifth page or so as well.

The lack of structure detracts greatly from what could have been a very interesting perspective from a foot soldier in the cartel wars.

Andrew says

Plus points for this book are that it provides a shocking and horrific account of the conditions in the city which has the highest murder rate in the world; Juarez. This is told from the perspective of a former sicario, or hit man who was an active duty police officer who conducted kidnappings and killings on behalf of the Juarez cartel.

The downside is that the first hand account acts as a double edges sword. While it allows information to be gained from the horses mouth, it also consists of considerable segments of his tale which are repeated, often more than once. This makes a large portion of the book really valueless to the reader. The book would have

benefited from more detail on the work which he carried out, preferably with specific examples.

This was definitely a good read but the manner in which it was written could have been better thought out.

Ana O says

This self proclaimed queen of procrastination has finally finished her book.

Literally me after reading El Sicario

You are now about to witness the strength of street knowledge. ~~not really~~

This book has more drama than a telenovela. El Sicario did what he had to do. He didn't choose the thug life. The thug life chose him. Or was it the other way around?

Here's the real reason he (likely) made the wrong career choice. Poverty.

But let's start at the beginning. I've been intrigued by el sicario ever since reading a crazy book by the American author Charles Bowden called Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields. It was almost too much for my young heart to handle.

Was I just looking for an excuse to post a gif of Benicio Del Toro? Maybe.

His head is draped in a black veil. He is not a huge man, but his body fills the space in the room. When he starts talking, he lifts his hands to the lens of the camera and you see nothing but these hands. And he says:

*I want to tell you
twenty years of my life,
twenty years of my life
serving narco-trafficking,
serving the cartel,
serving the patron,
with these hands.*

Random fact about me: I have a very soft spot in my cold black heart for crazy older men. To quote Tyrion Lannister: I have a tender spot in my heart for cripples and bastards and broken things. I am unwillingly fascinated by villains. I am by no means condoning violence. There's nothing cool about being a gangster. That being said, the world is not black and white. I try my absolute hardest not to judge anyone. No one is all good or all bad.

The Autobiography of a Mexican Assassin in many ways is a continuation of Murder City.

El Sicario is either a remorseful, reformed man or a monster, or both.

El Sicario, a man whose past is as vicious and sordid as that of the other members of the cartel, is a mystery. We don't know his real name. We don't know what he looks like. He is a ghost. A sinner.

“We can begin with my childhood . . . ”

And with the word childhood, the voice goes soft. Perhaps it is the black net veil over his face. He speaks inside of himself, to himself. A sigh—Oh—marks a memory that comes sometimes with a smile and often with a sob.

He speaks for two days.

He never stumbles.

He knows the way home.

El Sicario was a commandante in the Chihuahuan State police. He was trained in the US by the FBI. Of course, as he himself admits, all of the law enforcement academies in Mexico—the different police forces, the investigative police, the military police, and the army—have been used by the narco-trafficking organizations as training grounds for their future employees. Cadets and graduate students can easily be recruited by the narcos. And just to be absolutely clear, I'm in no way dissing the Mexican law enforcement system, I am simply repeating what I have read.

El Sicario joined the force. Sworn to protect the innocent, defend the weak. But in reality he couldn't be farther from that. He became a killing machine.

How did I get to the point where I no longer felt any scruples for the people that I killed?

He spends a great deal of time talking about narco bosses. El chaca, the boss, the patron, the one who commands... El Jefe has a wife in every city. For example, Don Amado had forty or forty-two wives. He got married whenever he wanted. They would get married, but with false judges. If the woman wants a marriage certificate, they will give it to her, just like they can provide fake driver's licenses.

If the narcos want something, they will get it, one way or another. If they don't get it for the good they will get it for the bad. And as far as the women are concerned, there is a saying: “If I want you, I will have you, for better or worse. If I can't have you one way, I'll have you another way. And if I can't have you, no one will have you, that will be the end of you, and there you will be buried. Simple.” For these women, there is no way out. You get to know a narco, and he wants you, you will get used to it and enjoy the life because you have no choice.

That's why I don't think I'd ever make it as a narco wife. Don't bring none of that into my house. All I'm saying is that marriage certificate in the china cabinet drawer better be accurate.

As long as the victims were men, he had no problem executing his role. What made him want to change, a wake-up call of sorts, was when they began to kidnap women. It's no secret that drug cartels have a penchant for rape. And he was not OK with that.

To be a sicario during that time became a real profession. But like I told you, it isn't like that any longer. Now you can look on the Internet and find a sicario. You can find someone advertising: “You want to kill someone? I'm a sicario. I will do it for you for \$5,000.”

And you are supposed to believe that for \$5,000 you can get somebody killed just because you don't like

him? This started to happen a lot and then what? You would see cars all shot up like a pincushion. But this is not the work of a sicario. This is the work of imitators.

The sicario knows his job. He knows exactly when to strike, he knows his objective. And the sicario would never, never advertise or publicize his work. He is someone who is always among the people. He has relationships with the people. He could be playing baseball with his kids or he could be attending a meeting in the town council at city hall. He knows how to behave, he knows how to dress. He knows how to conduct himself, he knows how to talk. He is well educated. This is what the narco-trafficking organizations know, and this is what they are willing to pay for by cultivating people in many places and for years, to ensure that their work is properly carried out.

And thus we come to the end of our voyage. I am happy to report that El Sicario has changed, and changed meaningfully. He is no longer killing people. Let's hope it stays that way.

Book playlist:

2Pac - Dear Mama
2Pac - Life Goes On
2Pac - Ghetto Gospel
2Pac - Hail Mary
Eminem - Space Bound
Gangsta's Paradise - Coolio feat. L.V.
Kendrick Lamar - Humble
The Notorious B.I.G. - Juicy
Future - Mask Off
Beastie Boys - Make Some Noise
G-Eazy & Kehlani - Good Life
The Weeknd feat. Daft Punk -Starboy
Wiz Khalifa feat. Charlie Puth - See You Again
The Chainsmokers - Sick Boy
Mobb Deep - Shook Ones
Jaymes Young - I'll Be Good
Tamer – Beautiful Crime
The Godfather- music of Henry Mancini with London Symphony Orchestra
Sicario Soundtrack - The Beast
Desperado - Antonio Banderas - Cancion del Mariachi
Kill Bill 2 Soundtrack - Malaguena Salerosa

Original review:

My bf - You read too many cartel novels.

Me - No I don't. That's so not true.

Sees a book titled El Sicario Hold my purse.

I have a problem. I think I need to start reading more cheesy romances. My bf is starting to fear me.

Erin says

I read this a couple of years ago and have been thinking about it a lot recently.. An incredible account of a man who used to be a part of the infamous Mexican drug cartel scene. The sicario tells his own story about how he was swept into the business of torture, blackmail, extortion, and murder.. In one particularly gruesome account, he speaks of kidnapping the wife of a man who owed money to the cartel. Everyday the man didn't pay up, the sicario describes cutting off one of the wife's fingers and sending it to her husband through the mail. His story is so frightening, it made it difficult to sleep the first few nights after reading it. This book provides a truly fascinating insider's prospective and attempts to shed some light on how Mexican teens are enticed to participate in such a dangerous, dirty business. Highly recommended.

Sheehan says

The whole book is a monologue of one man's involvement as an assassin for a cartel operating out of Juarez; it is every bit as disturbing and realistic as you might (not even be able to) imagine.

His is a story of some redemption, telling his tale on the run with his family constantly hiding from the blowback of his history; it is compelling because it is such a dire story.

But, aside from the introduction and a few asides by el sicario, the whole hows, what and whys are largely absent from this text, it is really a much more street-level insight into the violence of drug cartels.

One thing is clear, the drug war is corrupt and corrupting to all who intersect it, from the civilians who occupy the spaces drugs flow through on up to the governments that purport to be stopping it, there is just too much lucre for the madness to stop. Narco-terrorism is going to be to 2020 what the jihadis were to 2001 for the United States and Mexico; organized crime is flush with cash, infiltrated into so many civil institutions, technologically saavy, well-armed (thanks DEA!) and growing in numbers.

The ten-fold increase in border town deaths since 2002, is not to be ignored, it is reflective of the chaos and crises incumbent in cartels jockeying for position. These "awkward teenage years" which have the cartels navigating growth spurts, will precipitate changes likely to increase the scope of the cartels (albeit fewer of them) and the depth of the various vices in which they engage.

This is no joke...

Paul Massignani says

This is the only book of its kind. For a cartel assassin to not only escape from his former occupation alive, then willingly share in plain language how it gutted him in every way possible, this is a rare thing. Long after getting out of the business, he decided to marry a girl he'd met in the south of Mexico, where he'd been working an honest job. To do this, he had to submit his real name to the local authorities, along with his address. The cartel hitmen were stalking him around town within three days.

The sicario opens up and talks freely about the disregard for life, the spiritual bankruptcy, the delicate dance you have to do just to stay alive as a member of the cartel. The corruption in Mexico's government is

covered, and it's so much deeper than most of us in the USA can fathom. In truth, the Mexican government is very close to being overtaken by narco-traffickers.

There's just so many ways to die there: mess up a hit? Dead. Look at a boss's wife the wrong way? Dead. Average guy argues with a narco over a parking spot at a grocery store? Dead. Boss makes a mistake, tells you to kill the wrong person? The boss is always right, so you die. The cartel has a tight net of informants, from 12 year olds on Juarez corners to cabinet members who report to the President. There's nowhere to hide, no one to trust. The only option is to conform to the will of the capos. Or die. Or maybe you just die by slow asphyxiation, or being gradually boiled alive, because some coked-up, paranoid narco gets it in his head that you're an informant or a journalist. Or because it's a Thursday.

It made me extremely grateful for the law enforcement in the US, because it keeps evil in check, for the most part. There's corruption, for sure. The sicario experienced US Customs agents firsthand that were taking 50k to let a Chevy Suburban loaded to the gills with heroin pass right through the border with no inspection.

Comprehensive and sad, but also a great chronicle of a man whose spirit was contorted and withered by evil, but came back and was redeemed.

Jordan Parkhurst says

The content is incredibly interesting, but the "authors'" choice to let the Sicario determine the flow and organization was disastrous (as were their spotted and less than academic citations). He often seemed to exaggerate for effect, repeated himself and used cliched phrases. They should've saved the power of his story by couching it in a well organized story, complete with second hand source documents and people.

Richard says

This memoir of sorts forms the basis of a movie by Italian film maker Gianfranco Rosi "El Sicario: Room 164". Though he is never identified for obvious reasons, this purports to be the story of this individuals role as a killer and long association with a Mexican drug cartel before he escaped and found religion. Long, tedious, salacious it's everything you might expect if you're familiar with the work of "journalist" Charles Bowden who is hell bent on exposing the ruinous goings on of the mexican drug kingpins in the US/Mexico border region. The fascinating art of the story if it's to be beleived is the corruption right up to and including the office of the President Felipe Calderon that allows massive drug dealing in the name of profiteering and keeping Mexican society in a relatively controlled state.

Juan Duarte says

Powerful story. Sseems difficult to believe that things have gotten that bad in the border region. One has to wonder the extent of US involvement with this whole situation.

Sam says

While this is a candid and honest account of one man's time as a cartel hit man I was expecting more detail. I'm not sure whether this was deliberately left out or whether he just couldn't remember it I don't know but either way I was expecting and hoping for a more in depth account. It was also a little rambly and a couple of

things were repeated, which confused me at first as I thought I'd mis-read or misunderstood something but hadn't. The events he does detail are disturbing although they are not unexpected given the reputation the cartels have (even in the UK) and they do show the lengths they will go to to protect their interests. This is certainly an interesting read but not quite the all out account I expected.
