

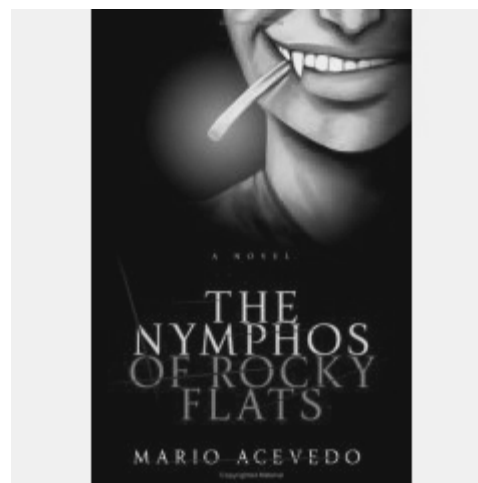


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Of vamps and vampires

by Vince Darcangelo (buzz@boulderweekly.com)

Nothing comes easy for private detective Felix Gomez when investigating strange goings-on at the former Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant. His old college roommate, who hired him for the gig, is acting quite suspicious, as are the women he questions regarding a recent outbreak of nymphomania among plant employees. (The infected women disrupt



Gomez' interrogations by aggressively attempting to seduce him, of course.) Meanwhile, Gomez has fallen head over heels in love with a sultry forest sprite with a well-endowed ex. Oh, and if he wasn't feeling insecure enough already, a team of Romanian vampire hunters is trying to kill him.

Felix Gomez learns quick that it's not easy being a vampire in Colorado.

Easily the best-titled book released this year, *The Nymphos of Rocky Flats* is the debut novel from local author Mario Acevedo, part one of a trilogy centered on Gomez: private eye/vampire/Gulf War veteran. But though this is his first published novel, Acevedo is no rookie. *The Nymphos of Rocky Flats* is the seventh book he's written. As he tells it, it just took him a while to find his voice.

"At one time I wanted to write really serious books," says Acevedo. "Over the course of time the people in my critique group would tell me, 'You know Mario, you're not as smart as you are smart ass. That's your strength. Write to your strength.' So I did that."

The result is *The Nymphos of Rocky Flats*, a humorous, irreverent tale of vamps and vampires that bridges the dark absurdism of Christopher Moore and Wes Anderson and the gratuitous camp of *Army of Darkness*.

Acevedo likens his book to another equally absurd film.

"I studied the movie *The Big Lebowski* because I loved the way they

used humor when dealing with some really dark subjects—the violence, the kidnapping and all that," he says. "They were able to use humor to have levity, but at the same time it didn't diminish the darkness of the story."

It's a winning formula, for underneath all the comedy is the dark cloud of Gomez' past and how he came to be a vampire. The book begins with Gomez as a soldier fighting in the current war in Iraq. He and his men mistakenly ambush a family, and, guilt-ridden, Gomez asks for punishment and is turned into a vampire following the attack. The account is based on an incident Acevedo witnessed when serving in the first Gulf War—minus the vampire part.

"It just really traumatized everybody," he says. "I was at this MASH hospital, just visiting. That's when they brought this little girl in. All these nurses and doctors were just really upset. It was just a horrible thing. And this little girl, her family is gone, she's all by herself, she's with people who don't speak her language. That episode stuck in my head."

Following the Gulf War Acevedo worked at Rocky Flats. As a result, the government needed to review and approve *The Nymphs of Rocky Flats* prior to publishing.

"If you write anything about Rocky Flats, if you worked there, you have to submit what you wrote to the Department of Energy," says Acevedo. "It's the first and only vampire book to have to get reviewed and declassified by the federal government. Your anti-terrorism dollars at work."

Acevedo says that the DOE didn't change any parts of the book, and he even includes the official approval letter on the opening page. He also claims to have no knowledge of classified information about Rocky Flats, such as the plausibility of the premise of *The Nymphs of Rocky Flats*. But as longtime Front Range denizens can attest, this fictional account isn't any more outlandish than some of the actual goings-on at the controversial nuclear weapons facility. And this one is a lot more fun.

On the Bill:

Mario Acevedo will read and sign *The Nymphs of Rocky Flats* at 7 p.m., Thursday, May 4, at the High Crimes Bookstore, 946 Pearl St., Boulder, 303-443-8346.

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