

## The Acid Test

Elmer Mendoza

The grisly execution of a well-known exotic dancer in the drug-infested Mexican city of Culiacán kicks off this brutal but underwhelming piece of "narco-lit," a sequel to *Silver Bullets*. For homicide detective Edgar "Lefty" Mendieta, the murder of Mayra Cabral de Melo (along with her roommate Yolanda) is personal: the two shared a mysterious but passionate connection, but his investigation soon sprawls out to cover the cartels, con men, and politicians, all beholden to one another. Lefty, in despair over his place in the world when we first meet him, tries to find salvation by avenging Mayra's killing. But hers is just one of many in a city utterly besieged by violence, which is about to get worse as the Mexican president escalates the drug war. A six-page cast of characters gives some hint to the scope of Mendoza's story, but his style of dialog without punctuation, attribution, or paragraph breaks complicates what should be a much more propulsive read. **VERDICT** A logical recommendation for admirers of the similarly themed novels of Don Winslow, though not as consistently brilliant.