

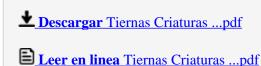
Tiernas Criaturas

Charles Bock



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A wide-ranging portrait of an almost mythically depraved Las Vegas, this sweeping debut takes in everything from the bland misery of suburban Nevada to the exploitative Vegas sex industry. At the nexus of this Dickensian universe is Newell Ewing, a hyperactive 12-year-old boy with a comic-book obsession. One Saturday night, Newell disappears after going out with his socially awkward, considerably older friend. Orbiting around that central mystery are a web of sufferers: Newell's distraught parents, clinging onto a fraught but tender marriage; a growth-stunted comic book illustrator; a stripper who sacrifices bodily integrity for success; and a gang of street kids. Into their varying Vegas tableaux, Bock stuffs an overwhelming amount of evocative detail and brutally revealing dialogue (sometimes in the form of online chats). The story occasionally gets lost in amateur skin flicks, unmentionable body alterations and tattoos, and the greasy cruelty of adolescents, all of which are given unflinching and often deft closeups. The bleak, orgiastic final sequence, drawing together the disparate plot threads, feels contrived, but Bock's Vegas has hope, compassion and humor, and his set pieces are sharp and accomplished. Reed Business Information



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