



Acrobat

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Gonzalo Lira's spy thriller *Acrobat* opens with a long, breathtaking chase scene through the streets of New York as a six-member group of counterintelligence agents under the code name Acrobat flee from another group of agents trying to kill them. Both groups work for the same man, the deputy director for counterintelligence in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). As Acrobat escapes one intricate trap after another, the reader is left trying to sort out where loyalties really lie and why.

At stake is sixty million dollars in payments from the Chinese government for CIA secrets passed on by a traitor. The traitor appears to be Nicholas Denton, the reptilian, ambitious deputy director, whom Acrobat is investigating. But later it appears to be Tom Carr, who is in charge of Acrobat. In any case, Denton is always one step ahead because he has an informant among the young superagents in Acrobat. The finale—a high-tech bank robbery to retrieve vital documents and a concurrent assassination—leaves dozens dead and the reader still unsure exactly what is going on.

After the initial chase scene, the story unfolds in flashbacks, many with spectacular spy action, that lay the background for Acrobat's plight. This background is so full of trash-talking (spies are regularly called "geeks" and civilians "mushrooms"), grisly in the details of murders and firefights, unsavory in developing the main characters, and politically cynical that it leaves the reader with a sense of overarching, mean-spirited pointlessness. Because of the hyperbolically seamy tone, it is sometimes tempting to believe that the novel parodies the spy thriller genre. But that is not likely the case. The climax and its aftermath are delivered as if the rest of the world hardly even exists.

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