

Now 81°F
High 88°F
Low 63°F
5 DAY FORECAST

Site Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH

El Paso Times Inside El Paso Southwest Parent

Jobs | Cars | Classifieds | Real Estate | Apartments | Shopping

News New & Updated Opinion Military Sports Business Entertainment Communities Living Obits Español Customer Service

For first novel, Segundo Barrio

Young-adult story 'Old Lady Perfume' deals with issues of many age groups

Rigoberto González / Special to the Times
Article Launched: 09/14/2008 12:00:00 AM MDT

First-time novelist Claudia Guadalupe Martínez makes her remarkable debut with "The Smell of Old Lady Perfume" (Cinco Puntos Press, \$15.95 paperback), a touching study of the heartaches that befall an 11-year-old girl living in El Paso's historic Segundo Barrio.

It's the first day of sixth grade, and Chela Gonzalez is ready to start the year at the peak of the elementary school hierarchy. With best friend Nora at her side (they're inseparable "like melted cheese on tortilla chips") and loving parents who value education, Chela's path to success is secure.

But then everything collapses when "something (goes) wrong inside Apá." Distraught over her father's illness, Chela stays home for a week.

By the time she does begin the sixth grade, it's a hostile welcome: Nora has joined mean girl Camila and her "clones," who subject her to ridicule whenever her Spanish "popped through like slices of color on a yellow wall that'd been painted white."

To make matters worse, Chela's body has begun to change in noticeable places, which makes her feel like "some sort of ugly caterpillar turning into an even uglier moth." Friendless and image-conscious, she must bear her burdens alone, sitting in "the ugly leftover chair."

So she looks to her father for hope. Apá's recovery is slow, even though he "doubled up on garlic and started drinking Chinese herbal tea." But a new goal sparks his motivation to keep living: He's determined to build the family their own house before he succumbs

Advertisement

to his sickness and its "smell of old lady perfume, of dying flowers and alcohol."

Suddenly the tide turns: Chela's academic skills and athletic prowess

are recognized, even by Camila, who invites her to be part of the in crowd, and Apá seems to be getting better. But Chela, at her early age, learns the hard way that appearances deceive, and that nothing as precious as family, friendship, health and happiness should be taken for granted.

Martínez has crafted a beautiful and heartfelt journey of a girl who "wasn't supposed to see" so much, but who "saw all kinds of things." Young readers, especially those navigating difficult issues such as poverty, illness, isolation, depression and death, will find a friend in Chela Gonzalez, a typical sixth-grader who learns to find strength from within in order to transcend the many troubles outside her control.

Adult readers will also catch a glimpse of the important struggles within the immigrant and border communities such as monitoring diet, trusting modern medicine, and encountering insensitivity to those "born on the other side," that is, Juárez.

"The Smell of Old Lady Perfume" is a necessary book for anyone who needs to know that the universe isn't "so large and empty."

Rigoberto González is an award-winning writer living in New York City. His Web site is www.rigobertogonzalez.com, and he may be reached at Rigoberto70@aol.com.

Meet the author

- What: "Author Claudia Martinez will give a reading and book signing to introduce "The Smell of Old Lady Perfume," a young-adult novel set in El Paso's Segundo Barrio.
- When: "6:30 p.m. Saturday.
- Where: "La Fe Cultural and Technology Center, 721 S. Ochoa (rear entrance).



More headlines

- Air Force officer, El Paso native killed in Pakistan
- Police say shooting doesn't mean rising gang violence
- County OKs new rules for adult businesses
- Otero sheriff ordered to halt raids
- Man shot at club says victims were bystanders
- 9 alleged cartel members arrested
- Technology helps fight enemy rockets
- U.S. Senate hopeful stops at senior center
- Response slow for call to help Ike victims
- 74% speak Spanish at home

Most Viewed Most Emailed

(From the last 12 hours)

RSS

1. 9 alleged cartel members arrested
2. Man shot at club says victims were bystanders
3. Air Force officer, El Paso native killed in Pakistan
4. Police release names of those shot outside nightclub Sunday
5. 74% speak Spanish at home
6. Otero sheriff ordered to halt raids
7. Man on Most Wanted list caught Monday
8. Police say shooting doesn't mean rising gang violence
9. Man gets punch in face for cutting in line at UTEP-NMSU game
10. James Thomas likely will start as UTEP quarterback Saturday

- Information: 838-1625.

BOOKMARK Font Resze Return to Top

POST YOUR COMMENTS:

Type in your comments to post to the forum

Name
(appears
on your
post)

Comments

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:

Post Comment



Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the Terms of Service and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. Be polite. Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. Send us your feedback.

Miners Mania

UTEP cross country runner gets C-USA honor
EL PASO - Japheth Ng'ojoy was recognized as the Conference USA Cross Country Male Athlete of the Week the league announced Tuesday morning. Full story

Entertainment

Win tickets to Santana concert
EL PASO - The El Paso Times is giving away tickets to this Friday's Santana concert at the Don Haskins Center. Full story

MEMBER FDIC

Choose No Hassle Banking for your financial wants and needs.

Roll over to learn more

- ▶ Credit Cards
- ▶ Auto Loans
- ▶ Direct Banking
- ▶ Healthcare Finance
- ▶ Home Loans
- ▶ Small Business

CapitalOne.com

TOP LISTINGS

1016 Rio Vista \$229,500. Beautiful remodeled adobe on fenced 3/4 acre.

1101 Eagle Ridge \$479,900 - STRIKING ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN MEDITERRANEAN STYLE HOME

11694 Norman Montion \$141,000. Beautifully Updated East Side Home,

1020 Los Moros \$278,000. \$3000 CONTRIBUTION TO BUYER.

[ALL LISTINGS](#)

[View All Videos](#)

SELECT A CATEGORY:

View All

Clinical Dietitian
BienVivir

RNs, Hospice RNs
Tenet

Medical Director
BienVivir

LVN/RN, CNA and

[View Employer Profiles](#)

POWERED BY DMC

El Paso Times **VIDEO** Marketplace

View All

Heaven Sent Florist

View All Videos
POWERED BY DMC © 2008

EL Paso Times **Real Estate VIDEO**

SELECT A CATEGORY

OR
CLICK BELOW TO VIEW A VIDEO

View All Areas

View All Categories

Your criteria did not

View All Videos
POWERED BY DMC

Cheap Gas?
click here!
elpasotimes.com/gas

You Don't Need **PLAN B.**
Visit Cars.com

Confidence Comes Standard™

<p>Discount Perfumes Shop Online for Great Savings on Brand Name Perfumes & Fragrances. BestPerfumes.org</p>	<p>Lady of America - Ladies Workout Express Full-service women's only fitness center and ladies only express 30 www.ladyofamerica.com</p>	<p>ladies perfume Thousands of Name Brand Perfumes for Less. www.FragranceShop.com</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Ads by Yahoo!

Copyright © 2008 by the El Paso Times and MediaNews Group and/or wire services and suppliers. None of the content on this site may be republished or reused in any way without the written permission of the copyright holder.



News Partners: Alamogordo Daily News · Carlsbad Current-Argus · The Deming Headlight · Farmington Daily Times · Las Cruces Sun-News · Ruidoso News · Silver City Sun-News

El Paso Times Site Map

Privacy Policy | MNG Corporate Site Map | Copyright