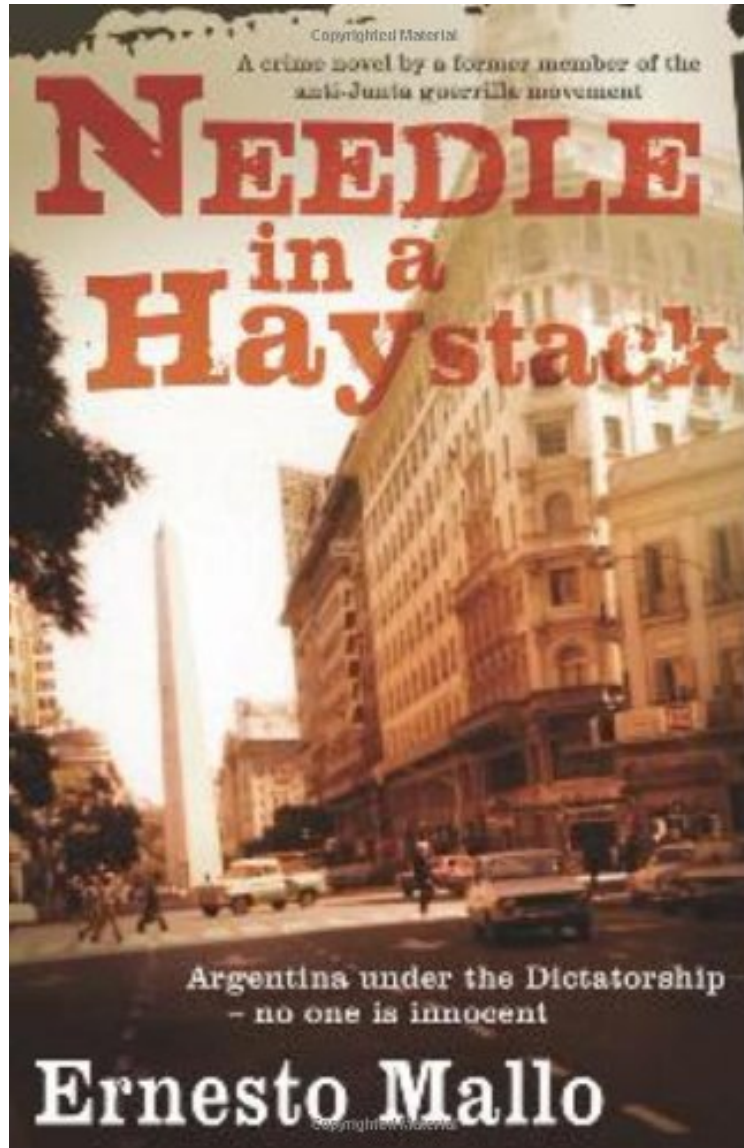


(Free read ebook) Needle in a Haystack (An Inspector Lascano Mystery)

## Needle in a Haystack (An Inspector Lascano Mystery)

*Ernesto Mallo*

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**Ernesto Mallo : Needle in a Haystack (An Inspector Lascano Mystery)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Needle in a Haystack (An Inspector Lascano Mystery):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Fairly Unremarkable Noir Detective Story Set in Dirty War-Era Argentina By Joe K This book is half a fairly unremarkable noir detective story and half a portrait of life in and around the criminal justice system of a corrupt, malevolent military dictatorship. If you're not familiar with the "National Reorganization Process" dictatorship era in Argentina, I suspect this book might be enough to get you curious to read

more about it. If you are, I'm not sure it has all that much to add. Up until the very end, the most unpredictable thing about the book is how strictly it follows the most predictable path forward, one you can pretty much map out no more than a quarter of the way through the story. The writing is interesting stylistically, but it is heavy-handed at its best moments and eyeroll-worthy at its worst. (It prominently features a bird that has its skull crushed by a cat the moment it steps out of its cage.) Except for Superintendent Lascano himself, none of the characters really develop beyond archetypes, and as a reader who doesn't necessarily pick up on these things until someone else points them out even I noticed how harsh Mallo is on his female characters. Perhaps only at the end was I particularly struck by a choice Mallo made. The fact that Lascano is unable to carve his bit of fairness out of this unfair system, that Giribaldi gets away with his crimes is very much in classic genre form. But the fact that Lascano's attempt doesn't just fail but that his very pro forma attempt to nudge his toe across the line of behavior that a military officer considered acceptable costs him his life more or less as a matter of course caught me a little off guard, and I think was a better illustration of his themes than most of what came before it. This is not just a society where there is no justice and those in charge enjoy impunity for the sins they justify to themselves. It is a society where a conscientious police officer can get murdered by the military in broad daylight on a busy street for getting closer to the agenda of just one individual within that vast apparatus, not even the agenda of the apparatus itself. Perhaps this merely seemed shocking in light of the highly rote story that led up to it. Even so, it felt a little more real - a little less pulp mystery and a little more 'this is a story that very much takes place in the real world, a fictional retelling of something that almost certainly happened to someone in Buenos Aires in 1979.' Either way, if this topic intrigues you, I would recommend Carlos Gamerro's "An Open Secret" exploring similar themes in a much better executed fashion.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very Good, Offbeat Procedural Set in Tumultuous Argentina

By zorba

This book's descriptions of rabid raw state power pitted against violent revolutionaries are evocative of the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and a host of other countries where middle-of-the-night knocks on doors and disappearing citizens were common. Only this was Argentina, tearing itself apart in the late 1970s. It was a time when a Buenos Aires detective had to first define a crime by who the criminals may be: if the victims were shot in the head, it was probably done by the government; if killed in some other fashion, it was probably a crime of passion or other motive. So you investigated only the latter, because if you investigated the government crimes, the government would crush you. Therein lay the challenge facing crusty detective superintendent Lascano, upon the discovery of three bodies by a roadside. But among the hindrances encountered by this unforgettable character is his attraction to Eva -- a carbon copy of his late and agonizingly lamented wife. Eva brings some complications into Lascano's life -- love (or lust) being only one of them. Mallo is an excellent writer and once you get your bearings in the first chapter or two, you will soon be enjoying a fast-paced, riveting police procedural set in a time and place that you may not have known much about. A winner!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting study of a crime and the detective heading the investigation in a bad period of Argentine history.

By Mr Axolotl

Although this book has a rather slow beginning, you do get to know the characters and eventually see all the connections for the crimes committed. Mostly this novel is about how Argentina was during those turbulent times. Well written, I ended up really rooting for the detective Lescano. I won't give any spoilers here but I will say the ending is a bit shocking but for what was going on, it makes tragic sense. I'm not sure I want to read more of the same, but this one was worth it.

"This is not simply a triumph of style; it is both a reflection on a time of bloodshed and a raw vision of human misery." Guillermo Saccomanno, winner of the Argentine National Literature Prize

"This man knows. He knows about guns, knows about women, knows about dead bodies. . . . But above all he knows how to narrate." Ana Mara Shua, author of *El peso de la tentacin*

Superintendent Lascano is a detective working under the shadow of military rule in Buenos Aires in the late 1970s. Sent to investigate a double murder, he arrives at the crime scene to find three bodies. Two are clearly the work of the Junta's death squads, murders he is forced to ignore; the other one seems different. The trail leads Lascano through a decadent Argentina, a country poisoned to its core by the tyranny of the regime. The third corpse turns out to be that of Biterman, moneylender and Auschwitz survivor. When Lascano digs too deep, he must confront Giribaldi, an army major, quick to help old friends but ruthless in dealing with dissenters such as Eva, the young militant with whom Lascano is falling in love.

Born in 1948, Ernesto Mallo is a published essayist, newspaper columnist, screenwriter, and playwright. He is a former anti-Junta militant who was pursued by the dictatorship. *Needle in a Hay Stack* is his first novel and the first in a trilogy with superintendent Lascano. The first two are being made into films.

From Publishers Weekly

As a member of a guerrilla movement that opposed Argentina's dictatorship, Mallo brings authenticity to his gripping debut, set in 1979 during military rule of that country. Early one morning, Superintendent Lascano of the Buenos Aires police looks into a report that two bodies have been dumped on a river bank. Instead, he finds three corpses--a young man and young woman, whose obliterated features are consistent with an army hit, and a man around 60, his face intact. The older victim turns out to be Holocaust survivor and money lender Elías Biterman, whose profession and faith provide no shortage of enemies. While Mallo reveals the killer's identity well before the

end, the book's power derives from his depiction of an honest cop trying to do his job when even a judge observes, "With so many corpses everywhere, why worry about one more?" Martin Cruz Smith and Philip Kerr fans will be rewarded. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist

Buenos Aires police detective Lascano, inconsolable over the death of his beloved wife, immerses himself in his work; and perhaps this combination of all-consuming work and grief allows him to function, if numbly, in a city and country at war with itself. It is 1979, and the military junta in Argentina is torturing, murdering, and disappearing anyone it sees as dissident. Nightly machine-gun fire, hyperinflation, police corruption, and anti-Semitism are facts of everyday life, as Lascano begins to investigate a seemingly routine murder. At the same time, he meets a young dissident, Eva, whose resemblance to his late wife is eerie, and he shelters her in his home. Soon Lascano, Eva, and Lascano's only friend, a forensic pathologist, are targets of the brutal regime. Journalist and playwright Mallo, himself once pursued by the junta, has written a polemical stunner. Opponents of the junta also used violence. They get a pass from Mallo, but the sense of brutal totalitarian oppression and fear in Buenos Aires under the generals is palpable and utterly compelling. --Thomas Gaughan

What Mallo has achieved is a flawless, relentless work, a book the reader will find suffocating and yet impossible to put down. A "Diario Y Noticias Crime fiction continues to be an effective prism when focusing on political violence. Mallo's writing is hard and sharp. But the book is not simply a triumph of style because the story itself offers both a reflection on a time of bloodshed and a raw vision of human misery. A" Guillermo Saccomanno