



## Death in the Andes

By Mario Vargas Llosa

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Evocatively intermingling past and present, the corporeal and the spiritual, *Death in the Andes* offers a fascinating panoramic view of contemporary Peru, telling the story of the disappearance of three men from a remote Andean village and the soldiers called in to investigate.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Ancient and modern horrors mingle in Vargas Llosa's somber yet oddly zestful novel, the most direct examination the Peruvian writer has made of his nation's complex political problems since *The War of the End of the World* and *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta*. At a remote location in the Andes, Civil Guards Lituma and Carreño investigate the disappearance of three men, two of whom were laborers on a highway project that will likely never be finished due to the region's increasing political volatility. Sendero Luminoso guerrillas have attacked several nearby towns; in a chilling early chapter, they stone to death two French tourists unwise enough to travel through the area. The Sendero Luminoso's activities and Carreño's casual aside acknowledging that the Civil Guard has committed atrocities in return create an atmosphere of menace that is further compounded by the officers' inability to communicate with the sullen and hostile seruchos. These mountain people treat the easygoing Lituma "as if he came from Mars." Indeed, affluent coastal Peru might as well be Mars to the sierra's impoverished Indians, who prove less receptive to the guerrillas' Marxist sloganeering than to the blandishments of a mysterious local couple who may have instigated sinister rites with links to those involving pre-Columbian human sacrifice. If Vargas Llosa is making a point about the eternal, intractable nature of violence in Latin America, it is so buried as to be virtually invisible. No matter: his vigorous storytelling and intriguingly complex structure past and present mingle in the intertwined narratives of various characters offer ample satisfaction without any overt message.

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From Library Journal

People have been mysteriously disappearing in the remote mining communities of the Andes, where the inhabitants are more likely to speak the Incan language Quechua than Spanish. Some blame the heavily armed bands of teenage Sendero Luminoso guerrillas that periodically descend on the villages to conduct mock trials and execute "imperialist lackeys." Others blame the equally bloodthirsty government troops. Danish anthropologist Paul Stirmsson suspects that some of the recent victims may have been killed in ritual sacrifices to appease pre-Columbian gods and demons. A witch named Dona Adriana and her husband, Dionisio, whose drunken antics recall the Dionysian revels of Greek antiquity, are the prime suspects. The author (*In Praise of the Stepmother*, LJ 9/1/90) makes no attempt to assess the Senderistas in political terms. Instead, he offers a sort of Diane Arbus portrait gallery of rural Peru, set in an entertaining detective novel format. For larger fiction collections.

*Edward B. St. John, Loyola Law School Lib., Los Angeles*

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From [Booklist](#)

Alternating points of view give meaningful structure to a disturbing new novel by Vargas Llosa, the great Peruvian writer. Guerrillas, army officers, environmentalists, a bizarre witch and her equally strange husband, and even a couple of French tourists all have their roles to play as the author fashions a plot centering on the mysterious killing of three men in a remote village. Finding the killer is the framework upon which the author develops a pageant of contemporary Peruvian society, a violent environment where even baby vicunas are not exempt from needless slaughter. For North American readers, Vargas Llosa's novel puts faces on, supplies reasons and motives behind, and imparts a history of the terrorism that has plagued Peru in recent years--a situation most of us see only as an inconvenience to traveling there. This pungent work of fiction imparts the real picture, a moving depiction of the strengths and weaknesses in the fabric of Andean culture. *Brad Hooper*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

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