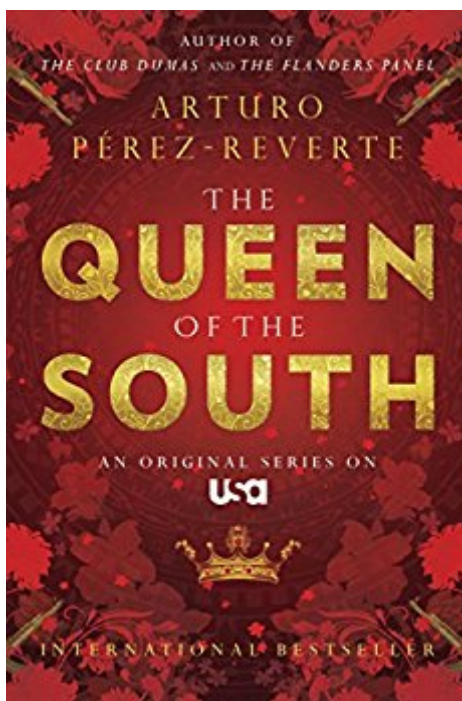


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Queen Of The South



Synopsis

This international bestseller inspired the must-watch drama on USA Network starring Alice Braga as Teresa Mendoza. From the master of the intellectual thriller • Arturo Pérez-Reverte, a remarkable tale, spanning decades and continents "from the dusty streets of Mexico to the sparkling waters off the coast of Morocco, to the Strait of Gibraltar and Spain" in a story encompassing sensuality and cruelty, love and betrayal, and life and death. Few authors inspire the kind of passion that Arturo Pérez-Reverte does. Reviewers, readers, and booksellers alike have embraced his fiction as the perfect blend of suspense and literary ambition. A global bestseller, he is one of the most admired and widely read authors in the world. And this stunning novel is his best yet. Teresa Mendoza's boyfriend is a drug smuggler who the narcos of Sinaloa, Mexico, call "the king of the short runway," because he can get a plane full of coke off the ground in three hundred yards. But in a ruthless business, life can be short, and Teresa even has a special cell phone that Guero gave her along with a dark warning. If that phone rings, it means he's dead, and she'd better run, because they're coming for her next. Then the call comes. In order to survive, she will have to say goodbye to the old Teresa, an innocent girl who once entrusted her life to a pinche narco smuggler. She will have to find inside herself a woman who is tough enough to inhabit a world as ugly and dangerous as that of the narcos—a woman she never before knew existed. Indeed, the woman who emerges will surprise even those who know her legend, that of the Queen of the South. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

The drug trade throughout Mexico, Latin America, and the Mediterranean come alive in Arturo Perez-Reverte's latest novel, quite different from his intellectual mysteries. Here he writes the "biography" of Teresa Mendoza, a young woman from Sinaloa, Mexico, who becomes the mastermind of a multimillion dollar drug empire operating from Marbella, Spain. This novel's challenge lies not in an intellectual puzzle, but in understanding the business networks Teresa builds with drug lords from Russia, Italy, Morocco, and Colombia, along with various agents of government whom she buys off. As she becomes a successful businesswoman, known as "The Queen of the South," the suspense develops: Will she stay alive? And how? The story begins in Mexico when Teresa is twenty-three. Uneducated but attractive, she is in love with Guero Davila, a Chicano pilot involved in shipping coca. When she suddenly receives a phone call telling her to run for her life, she does so, escaping through Mexico City into Spain, and then Morocco. Putting her knowledge of drug transportation to work by involving herself in hash-running between Morocco and Spain, she ends up with a short jail sentence but an important friendship with another inmate, Patty O'Farrell, the rebellious daughter of a wealthy Spanish family. When they are released, they set up a big-time drug trafficking business, with Teresa running the show and becoming, eventually, the person with whom everyone in the business must deal. Teresa's story is not told in linear fashion. An unnamed speaker/narrator, presumably Perez-Reverte himself, has come to Sinaloa to investigate and describe Teresa Mendoza's life and business. Interviewing everyone with any information, he inserts himself and his interviews into the narrative.

I have read every Perez-Reverte novel . . . because he brought to life the worlds of antiquarian books, paintings, old fencing masters, chess, crumbling churches and treasure maps. All except one -- The Queen of the South. I balked because it was about drug running-- a subject I have never been interested in. (I think the closest I got to anything related to recreational drugs was growing a "false aralia" houseplant at work and fooling people into thinking I was growing "weed" right in front of the boss.) It was months after it came out when I finally decided to pick it up. (My problem, as a reader, is that I ALWAYS FINISH a book, no matter how bad or boring it is. Because I was never

going to let the 8 bucks I spent on it -- go to waste.) So I was afraid I was going to be stuck with a book that would put me to sleep for weeks. I was WRONG. Arturo Perez-Reverte has done it again! He has enthralled me with the story of Teresa Mendoza. She starts out as the girlfriend of Guero Davila, a small plane pilot who flew drug shipments between Colombia and the U.S. He is killed (in flashback) and her story begins when she flees Sinaloa. Reverte's writing is riveting. He tells of her incredible rise in the world of drug trafficking . . . she finds love (of sorts) again with Santiago, a boat driver; fate, Edmond Dantes and a lost "treasure" finds her in the form of a wealthy prison inmate, Patty O'Farrell. Teresa leverages her new-found wealth into power among the drug traffickers. And there's more betrayal and tragedy. It just doesn't stop. Not a dull moment! There's a subtle parallel to the novel called The Count of Monte Cristo but not much because while the Monte Cristo book is almost entirely about revenge, Teresa's story will end with a "settling of debts."

After carving out a solid niche for himself in the "intellectual thriller" genre by writing a number of entertainments (some good, some not) revolving around the arcane and esoteric, bestselling Spanish novelist Perez-Reverte shifts gears here with a book that is neither thriller nor obsessed with high culture paraphernalia. Quite the contrary, this is the tale of a poor, uneducated Mexican girl who, over the course of twelve years, manages to become a hugely wealthy narcotics transporter. The story of Theresa Mendoza is told partially from her perspective as events happen, and partially by an investigative reporter who is trying to write a book about her and is interviewing anyone once connected to her. Before becoming a novelist, Perez-Reverte was a well-known journalist, and his former profession informs the entire book as his fictional journalist connects the dots, from Sinaloa, Mexico to Morocco to Marbella, Spain. Some readers seem not to care for the alternating voices, but it adds much needed depth and texture to what is otherwise a fairly flat and straightforward rags to riches story. However, unlike most gutter to penthouse tales, Theresa is not a character who always had large dreams and wanted to be "king of the world". Rather, her story shows her to be an emotionally dead soul who does whatever it takes to survive in the harsh environment she inhabits. While this is a nice change of pace from the usual Scarface hysterics, her cool reserve also means that there's no way for the reader to connect with her (unless you, too, have been on the run from hitmen). Which is not to say that she isn't believable, it's just that she's a character with a single motivation, survival, and this one track detachment gets kind of lame as she grows more and more powerful.

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