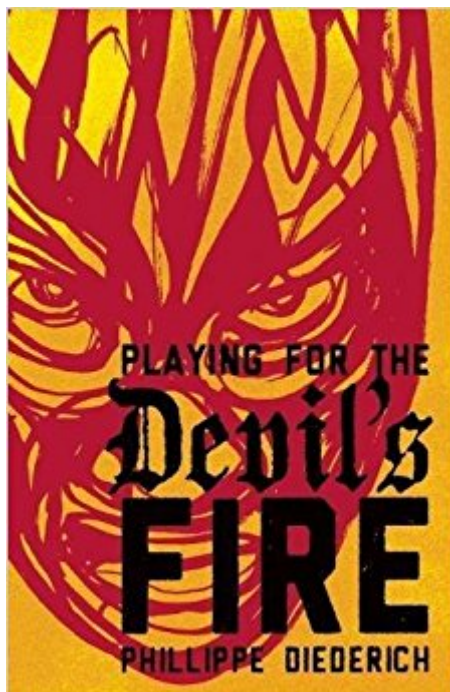


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# Playing For The Devil's Fire



## Synopsis

Thirteen-year-old Boli and his friends are deep in the middle of a game of marbles. An older boy named Mosca has won the prized Devil's Fire marble. His pals are jealous and want to win it away from him. This is Izayoc, the place of tears, a small pueblo in a tiny valley west of Mexico City where nothing much happens. It's a typical hot Sunday morning except that on the way to church someone discovers the severed head of Enrique Quintanilla propped on the ledge of one of the cement planters in the plaza and everything changes. Not apocalyptic changes, like phalanxes of men riding on horses with stingers for tails, but subtle ones: poor neighbors turning up with brand-new SUVs, pimped teens with fancy girls hanging off them. Boli's parents leave for Toluca and don't arrive at their destination. No one will talk about it. A washed out masked wrestler turns up one day, a man only interested in finding his next meal. Boli hopes to inspire the luchador to set out with him to find his parents. Phillippe Diederich was born in the Dominican Republic and raised in Mexico City and Miami. His parents were forced out of Haiti by the dictatorship of Papa Doc Duvalier in 1963. As a photojournalist, Diederich has traveled extensively through Mexico and witnessed the terrible tragedies of the Drug Wars. Â Â

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up-Nothing ever happens in the small Mexican town of Izayoc, where 13-year-old Boli spends his time playing marbles with his friends, working at his family's bakery, and reading about the luchadores, who not only wrestle but fight crime, too. That changes one hot Sunday morning when the severed head of Boli's teacher is found in the plaza; less than a week later, another murder is discovered. As fear and suspicion escalate, Boli begins to notice the subtle changes happening around him, especially the flashy newcomers arriving in expensive cars with California license plates. When Boli's parents fail to return from their trip to request federal assistance, he sets out to discover the truth behind their disappearance with the help of washed-up wrestler El Chicano Estrada. Gritty and unflinching, Diederich's narrative doesn't shy away from the ugliness of Mexico's ongoing narcoviolence, which stands in stark contrast to Boli's idealism and innocence. Young but grounded, Boli is the moral center of the story, and while others around him succumb to the allure of drug culture, he stands his ground but pays the price for his choice; unsurprisingly, it's through his eyes that the author, who grew up in Mexico City, comments on the widespread corruption and bloodshed. Heavily peppered with Mexican Spanish, the dialogue is authentic, and while a glossary is included, having to consult it repeatedly might disrupt some teens' reading experience. VERDICT A compelling yet horrifying read that will resonate with murder-mystery and thriller fans.-Â- Audrey

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"Full of grim and shocking violence, Izayoc here represents a demoralizing reality perhaps already too familiar. Childhood at its most hopeful and heartbreaking; readers seeking lighthearted, sanitized fare should turn away." Kirkus Reviews "As this grim murder mystery unfolds, 13-year-old Boli and his best friend Mosca become reliant on a luchador named Chicano, a masked wrestler working the amateur circuit, as a real-life hero and protector after Boli's parents go missing, and the body count mounts. Diederich (Sofrito) portrays Mexico with a stark intensity and raw emotional turmoil as Boli navigates a mercilessly cruel world." Publishers Weekly, Starred Review "It's that rare book that addresses moral issues and current events in a story that never stops tugging at the reader's heart. We need these kinds of books so different minorities can see themselves in the pages, but also so that other realities can be experienced and perhaps understood by a general audience." The Huffington Post

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