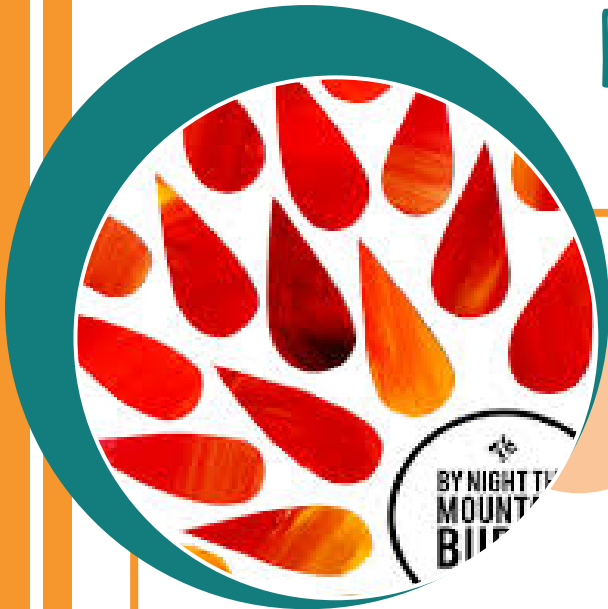


BY NIGHT THE MOUNTAIN BURNS



Author: Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel
Publisher: And Other Stories
Year of Publication: 2014
Pages: 288
Format: 13x20 cm

The delightful and fierce narration of a boy growing up in a harsh paradise: the story of a family, of a community, of an island made of pride, dust and fire.

By Night The Mountain Burns recounts the narrator's childhood on a remote island off the West African coast, living with his mysterious grandfather, several mothers and no fathers.

A candid, deceptively sober narrative voice weaves brief histories of a collective existence shaped by living on the shores of a beautiful and savage sea. By listening to the narrator we learn the hunger and the prodigality of nature, the unstoppable illness, the crazy strength of the crowd. Following his voice – at once the dreamlike voice of a child and the disenchanted one of a remembering man – we learn of the hottest chilli peppers in the world, of the great adventure that is making a canoe, and we feel the thrill of the first love adventures.

The little stories of a family surviving happily, no matter the dust and the heat, mix with the greater history of the island and the village, like the great story of a bonfire menacing to destroy everything. Superstition dominates: now the islanders must sacrifice their possessions to the enraged ocean god. What of their lives will they manage to save?

In its lyrical evocation of the island, Ávila Laurel's writing builds quietly, through the oral rhythms of traditional storytelling, into gripping drama worthy of an Achebe or a García Márquez.

«Grandfather didn't speak to us, but this didn't bother us the way the lack of fish did».

Press

«The volcanic island of Annobón, off the west African coast, provides the setting for this novel about a poor community facing a series of natural disasters. Survival, hope and despair wrestle in this surprising work by Equatorial Guinea's leading author.»

Angel Gurria-Quintana, Financial Times

Prizes

Shortlisted for the 2015 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize



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Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel was born in 1966 in Equatorial Guinea, Africa's only Spanish-speaking country. His parents were from the remote Annobón Island, off the West African coast. *The Gurugu Pledge* was his second novel to appear in English, following his 2015 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize-shortlisted debut *By Night The Mountain Burns*, based on his memories of growing up on Annobón.

Ávila Laurel has been a constant thorn in the side of his country's long-standing dictatorial government. A nurse by profession, for many years he was one of the best known Equatorial Guinean writers not to have opted to live in exile. But, in 2011, after a week-long hunger strike in protest against Obiang's regime, timed to coincide with the President of Spain's visit to Equatorial Guinea, Ávila Laurel moved to Barcelona. He writes across all media, in particular as a blogger, essayist and novelist.