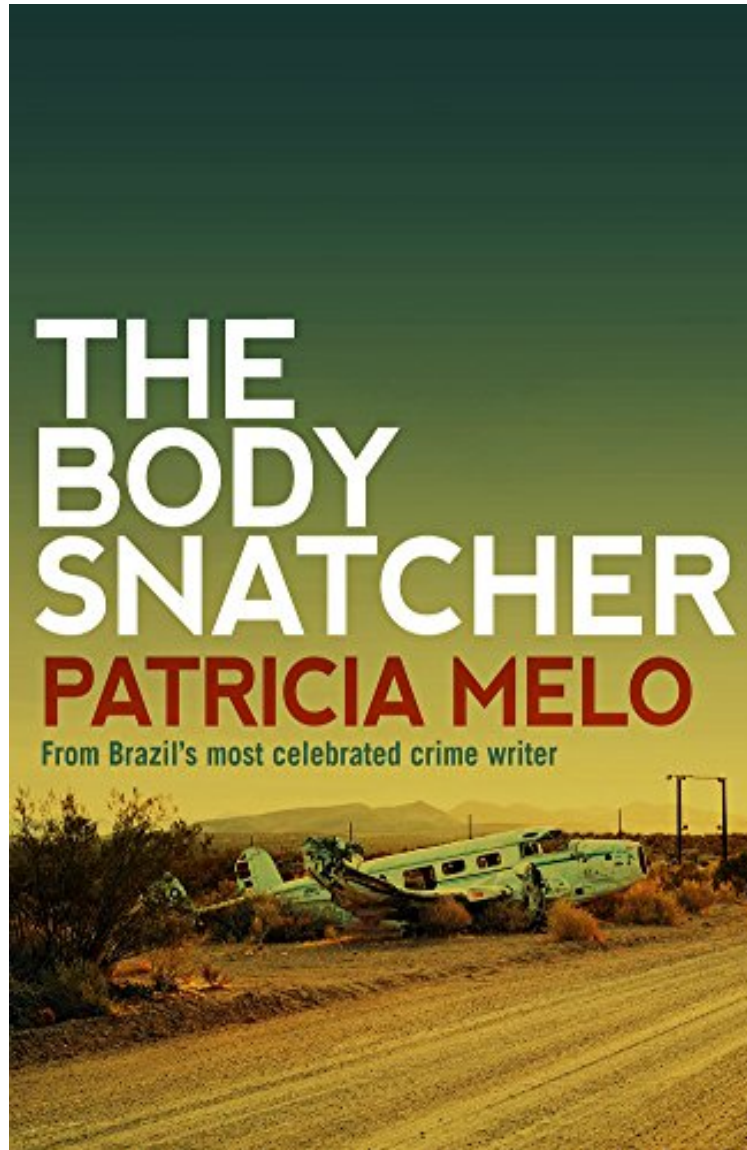


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The Body Snatcher

Patricia Melo

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Patricia Melo : The Body Snatcher before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Body Snatcher:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Brazilian take on classic roman noir. Corrupt people and fallen 'heroes'. Admirable, but not for everyone.By Craig M SistersonOne bright Sunday on the banks of the Paraguay River in lowlands Brazil, the narrator witnesses the fatal crash of a small plane. He finds a kilo of cocaine in the dead pilot's backpack which he pockets. Thus begins a long slide into dark and dangerous deeds he never before would have

considered. The term 'noir' is bandied about a lot nowadays as a synonym for crime fiction in general, or any type of darker, non-cosy crime, at least. But noir fiction (or 'roman noir') was traditionally a literary sub-genre somewhat akin to hardboiled detective tales, but centered on someone other than a detective. In 'noir fiction', whether it was a victim, perpetrator, witness, or suspect, the 'hero' would often be self-destructive, trapped in no-win situations by both a corrupt system and their own failings. Think James M Cain more than Hammett or Chandler, or some of the novels of Jim Thompson, Elmore Leonard, and others. With *The Body Snatcher*, acclaimed Brazilian author Patricia Melo delivers plenty of that good old-fashioned pure noir. Her narrator is a bit of a loser, who lucks upon a tragedy and in a snap decision decides to improve his own life rather than calling the police. After all, who could it hurt? Unsurprisingly, things don't go well. The set-up for this tale of a 'hero' falling is a familiar one: a pretty ordinary man stumbles over a crash in a remote area and finds no survivors but does find something of life-changing value. Can he get away with taking it for himself? In this case it's a large amount of high-grade cocaine, rather than a suitcase full of cash or other valuables. But Melo delivers more than just *A Simple Plan* transplanted to the Bolivia-Brazil border. The former screenwriter expertly draws us in to the sultry and stifling world of the region, the environment and the people - rich and poor of the region - a place where survival is the highest value and decency seems to corrode in the humidity. After taking the cocaine for himself, the narrator later learns the pilot's body was washed away by the time the wreck was discovered. Juggling a girlfriend who works for the police with an amateurish side business selling his windfall baggie by baggie on the street, he decides to use his inside knowledge of the crash to his advantage, looking to make even more money off the grieving family. How much would they pay to recover their beloved son's body for burial? Distilled like that, the narrator comes across like a bit of a scumbag, and there's certainly plenty of evidence to back up that view. But like the noir masters of the past, Melo does a nice job creating a narrative drive in *The Body Snatcher* where readers are drawn in by her skill, so that we want to follow along even if the lead character is pretty dis-likable or lacking in moral compass. He's not an evil man, perhaps not even a bad one, just an ordinary guy who gets caught up in something and whose own self-interest overwhelms any thoughts for others as the hole gets deeper and deeper. Fans of classic noir will likely enjoy *The Body Snatcher*, which seems a good example of the form. The story has a grittiness and griminess to it, where everyone involved is corrupt or corruptible, a little or a lot. For those more used to other types of crime, it could be a bit jarring in parts, style or perspective-wise, but Melo has an adroit touch for pared-down prose, and there is plenty of action to keep the pages turning. Overall I found it to be a tale that I admired as much as enjoyed. This review was first published on "Crime Watch" -[...] 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very good story with a slow start By avidbookreader Slow start into the story but it moves fast. Melo is a talented writer and she has a terrific translator, Clifford Landers. The story is about a salesman on the make who witnesses a plane crash, steals the cocaine that he finds and tries to sell it. In doing so, he angers the local drug dealer who pushes him to blackmail an affluent family to save his skin. This guy had a lot of personal problems and has a history of making bad decisions. Told in 1st person, this was a interesting story and I highly recommend it. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. brilliant Brazilian corruption crime caper By A Customer *The Body Snatcher* Patricia Melo; Clifford E. Landers (translator) Bitter Lemon, Sep 8 2015, \$14.95 ISBN 9781908524539 He lost his telemarketing job in So Paulo so he moved to Corumba on the Bolivian border. There he sleeps with Sulamita who keeps telling him to leave the small village to find work in the big city. When he observes a plane crash into the nearby Paraguay River, he rushes to the site. Realizing immediately he cannot help or get help in time to save the life of the dying pilot, he steals a watch and a backpack filled with cocaine that he later tries to sell. When the police arrive, the body is missing. At the same time the mans drug sales angers the local mob who demand full remittance for the cocaine he purchased. Abetted by Sulamita and a morgues employee, he blackmails the pilots affluent family who agree to pay him if he returns the corpse. Now all he needs is an unrecognizable body. This brilliant Brazilian corruption crime caper stars an antihero whos spiraling out of control escapades lead to a series of misadventures to the audiences reading pleasure. Fast-paced from the start, the tremendous *Body Snatcher* will have fans seeking other works by Patricia Melo (see *The Killer* and *Lost World*). Harriet Klausner

Praise for *The Body Snatcher*: "An excellent and atypical book, a fantastic adventure." *The Huffington Post* "An explosive mixture of dread, greed and corruption. You won't put it down until you've read the very last page." *Cosmopolitan* This tightly plotted novel by Brazil's best-selling crime author is a tale of drug dealing gone wrong, police corruption, and macabre blackmail, set in a heat-soaked town in the vast untamed Brazilian lowlands bordering Bolivia. One bright Sunday, alone on the banks of the Paraguay River, the narrator witnesses the fatal crash of a small plane. He finds a kilo of cocaine in the dead pilot's backpack and pockets it along with the pilot's expensive watch. Thus begins the protagonist's long slide into corruption. When police locate the crash site, the pilot's body is missing and a large-scale search ensues. Our hero, now involved in a busted cocaine deal, ends up owing a Bolivian drug gang so much money that blackmailing the wealthy family of the dead pilot seems to be the only way out. When the family secretly agrees to pay serious money to recover the body of their son, our hero, who does not have the pilot's body, decides someone else's will do. . . . Or so he thinks. Patricia Melo is an author and playwright born in Sao Paulo (1962). Her novels *Lost World*, *The Killer*, *In Praise of Lies*, and *Inferno* have been published in English to rave

reviews. Her works have also been translated into Italian, Spanish, and Dutch.

Praise for *The Body Snatcher*: 'An excellent and atypical book, a fantastic adventure.'--Huffington Post Canada 'An explosive mixture of dread, greed and corruption. You won't put it down until you've read the very last page.'--Cosmopolitan Brazil
Praise for Patricia Melo: Melo (*The Killer* and *In Praise of Lies*) is a promising literary crime novelist, one of a new crop of Brazilian suspense writers that includes Rubem Fonseca. Melo keeps the tale oscillating between morbid intrigue and hilarity, deftly skewering the publishing industry in the process PW
The jolts that this Brazilian thriller delivers (*The Killer*) come not from the repeated instances of gore but from Maiquel's recurrent longing for basic human needs--love, salvation, a spiffy pair of shoes. New Yorker
Brazilian screenwriter and playwright Melo has combined the anomie of Quentin Tarantino and her country's landscape to create a highly readable study of a killer for hire. Library Journal 'Casually brutal and utterly uncompromising, *Lost World* is nerve-shreddingly compelling from start to grizzly finish .-- Observer
Very, very dark, *Lost World* is grimly compelling and superbly atmospheric read' Guardian