



## Crux: A Cross-Border Memoir

*Jean Guerrero*

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## Crux: A Cross-Border Memoir Details

Date : Published July 17th 2018 by One World

ISBN :

Author : Jean Guerrero

Format : Kindle Edition 352 pages

Genre : Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction



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## From Reader Review Crux: A Cross-Border Memoir for online ebook

### Beau says

Engrossing, stunning and beautifully written. Guerrero's memoir interrogates a lifelong search for truth in unsparing but non-judgmental depth. I read a pre-publication copy and look forward to the retail edition.

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### Ari says

This book felt a little too all over the place for me. It was interesting to read about the author's history and ancestors and at times I couldn't put this book down. But other times it got a little heavy with the philosophical and maybe a bit trippy and I got a bit bored. 2.5 stars

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### Tonstant Weader says

Mental illness is a difficult disease with side effects that extend to family and loved ones. Jeanette Guerrero's father was diagnosed with schizophrenia and his presence in and out of her life was enriching and traumatizing. To understand him and herself, to capture their history and where they come together, Jean Guerrero began a memoir of her family and the borders they cross every day. She called it Crux because it is about crossing borders, not just between the US and Mexico, but between reality and surrealism, faith and reason, between ethnicity, language, and self. It is about that space between at the crossing, the crux. She says her father is not Mexican, not American, he is the hyphen.

She describes her childhood which was an interesting mix of privilege and struggle. Her mother is a doctor and was able to provide financial security, but their father's absence and presence were both disorienting in different ways. She and her sister felt their father's neglect and seeming indifference deeply. Their mother's anger mixed with love was another hazard. Both rebelled in dangerous ways. Jean studied neuroscience before journalism and began her career working for The Wall Street Journal in Mexico. She wanted to work in Mexico in part to connect with her Mexican roots and maybe understand her father.

Jean Guerrero's memoir is intriguing and beautiful written. There is a poetic urgency to her writing at times. I find myself enjoying a memoir that written by a lesser writer would make me roll my eyes. To be honest, I still rolled my eyes a little bit. She is very credulous of the supernatural, casting spells herself, believing in potions and spirits. She looks at how her father is perceived as insane in America and as a shaman in Mexico and wonders how much of mental illness is people with powers we don't understand and perceive. Another crux deeply explored, between insanity and shamanism, the scientific and the mystic. Somehow she makes the mystical seem quite probable though when she writes, though she cites left-brain, right-brain theories long since debunked. Abd yet, that left-right crossing is another Crux.

I received an e-galley of Crux from the publisher through NetGalley

Crux at Penguin Random House

Jean Guerrero author site

★★★★

<https://tonstantweaderreviews.wordpress.com/2018/07/17/review-crux-by-jean-guerrero/>

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### **J.D. Dehart says**

Crux is a haunting book by an author who knows how to use words lyrically. The book has a sense of atmosphere and paints the figures it features with clear lines. This is a text that swirls with cultural questions and stirs much conversation.

I will also note here the power of this book as an example of memoir/nonfiction. The truth of the story is part of its efficacy. Crux will be released in the United States on July 17, 2018.

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### **Rachel says**

It's taken me a hot minute to complete this book. There were times when I thought I would fly through it, and then I lost steam - whether that was the fault of the memoir or myself, I can't say for sure. As I read this book, I had many thoughts - thinks I liked, didn't like, and various critiques. Critiques of the author's character - of her thoughts and/ or actions, of her relationships (mostly with her father), etc. In the end, I've decided not to voice any of those things. The rating I've given this book is a reflection of my enjoyment only - not the actual contents or merits of this memoir. The author's voice here and her story didn't really resonate with me and I struggled to connect with it.

We can only tell our own truth - which is what Jean did with this memoir. I don't think my thoughts beyond that are really relevant.

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### **PattyMacDotComma says**

I didn't finish this. Her memories jumped from pre-school to teens as did her stories about her parents and grandparents, and although I read about a third and "enjoyed" her descriptions, I couldn't get interested in her family enough to finish. Too confusing for me. Other readers may really enjoy her border story, which is kind of what it is.

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### **Kathy says**

I won a copy in a Goodreads giveaway, this did not influence my review.

I've read many memoirs by adult children of parents with mental illness. Like many of the best, Guerrero's is honest, insightful and, at times, harrowing; what makes Guerrero's memoir unique is her ability to look at mental illness with fresh eyes. Rather than dismissing her father as paranoid, she utilized her journalistic skills to research myriad factors - the U.S. government's history of using civilians (without knowledge or consent) for research, her family's complicated history, the cultures that influenced her father (Mexican and American), and the reactions of those around them. Perhaps most astonishing is that Guerrero focuses on

raising questions without accepting any single answer; the truth can be messy and Guerrero allows for that. Her writing style is fluid and changes depending on whether she is writing about her own memories, a family member's, or sharing relevant research. The changes in style/voice can disrupt the continuity and flow of the book but Guerrero's writing is consistently compelling, compassionate, and searing. There are sections near the end of the book that I found a bit abstract and philosophical and less enjoyable than the concrete research and stories that precede it. Other sections could have been pared down, but overall I found this to be an engrossing and unique memoir.

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### **Paula says**

Jean is on a journey to find and understand her father. She writes very eloquently and her family history was an interesting subject. At times, the story really tugs at your heartstrings and other times it got a little too philosophical for me.

The story of her family coming between Mexico and the US was pretty interesting, how it was a bit confusing for she and her sister, sometimes fitting in and sometimes not while going to school. Jean's father is believed to be schizophrenic but is never truly diagnosed by a doctor in the US and is considered a Shaman in Mexico. This was an interesting story. I got the book from Netgalley to read and review.

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### **Sarah says**

Thank you to Penguin Random House for this ARC in exchange for my review. Jean Guerrero's *Crux: A Cross-Border Memoir* is an outstanding meditation on borders: the shifting boundaries between Mexico and the United States, magic and madness, and childhood and adulthood. I loved the lyricism of Guerrero's writing and the honesty of her musings on her relationship with her wildly-dysfunctional family. A key argument of the text is that the state of "insanity," like the border between countries, is socially constructed. Much of the memoir attempts to make sense of different relatives' histories of migration and immigration to the United States, "sanity" and "insanity" in order to explain the people they became in old age, so if you are looking for a straightforward recounting of the events of an author's life, this book might frustrate you. In some ways, the experimental form of the work seemed designed to articulate the author's main stance: boundaries between people, places, and states are porous and fluid and, therefore, attempting to tell her story without including the stories of her parents and grandparents would feel forced and inauthentic. Overall, I was extremely taken with this work. The narrative is certainly complex and not for the faint of heart, but it is also incredibly haunting and thought-provoking. I read quite a bit, but I feel sure that this is a memoir I won't soon forget!

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### **Sarah - All The Book Blog Names Are Taken says**

I'm not sure how to rate this. Some parts dragged foreverrrr. The last part, like last 6% or so, was super interesting and honestly, I find the family history as a whole more intriguing than her pursuit of her father.

Full review to come

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## **Marialyce says**

4 muddled and ruffled stars

My reviews can be found here: <https://yayareadslotsofbooks.wordpress...>

"Crux is a constellation located in the southern sky in a bright portion of the Milky Way. . Its name is Latin for cross, and it is dominated by a cross-shaped or kite-like asterism that is commonly known as the Southern Cross."

Jean Guerro has always wanted her father's love, his praise, his admiration of her. She searches for a way, any way to make him connect with her but her father, Papi is a troubled man. He is a diagnosed schizophrenic, although Jean and Papi and some family doubt that diagnosis. They see Papi as being gifted, a man who communes with nature, a seer, a reader of destiny, a clairvoyant for sure the voices he hear and the things he does make him so. Marco Antonio is an enigma, a man Jean strives in this memoir to know, to explain, to march in sync with and yet Marco is a totally disconnected man. He goes through bouts of being addicted to alcohol to drugs of many kinds and casting himself adrift in a world that only he seems to understand fully. He is man haunted by intellect, by reality, by being different, distant and divergent from the norm.

In many ways Jean, who becomes an investigative reporter, tries to be like Marco, for in being like him she might come to a better understanding, a better communion with her father, a way in which to be a daughter to a man who is always unsettled and dislocated. She travels in Mexico linking up with family people who know her father, if that is at all possible to know a man such as Marco. Can she, in finding a reason for her father's behavior, therefore find a reason for hers?

This was a complex story as Ms Guerro tries to see her father from all aspects. Is he really the schizophrenic that some think him to be or is he a mystical creature, one who reads signs, a shaman, a healer, a sorcerer? It is a painful journey that the author takes and many times it was a difficult story to both read and tell. For Jean, her father is her constellation, he is the bright portion of her life.

Thank you to Jean Guerro, Random House Publishing, and NetGalley for a copy of this tangled tale.

John Nash once said "In madness, I thought I was the most important person in the world." I did find this self same idea in Marco as well.

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## **Karen says**

This memoir told by the journalist daughter of a paranoid man addicted to narcotics, sliding into insanity is well-told. It is intense and I could feel Jean's emotion as she works through details of her family relationships and how she comes to terms with the hand she was dealt. Can't imagine what that must have been like - I find myself days later thinking about her story. Thanks to One World Books for the ARC in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Megan (Coffee by the Novel) says**

Crux by Jean Guerrero is a raw and haunting story of a daughter's search to understand her father and his crossing between reality and imagination, while also searching herself along the way. This memoir is a complex investigation into Guerrero's own family and explores the cultural differences between the United States and Mexico.

I was engrossed by this well-written story, and parts of her experiences resonated with me on a personal level as I reflected on my own cultural background. Crux brings attention to current issues in the world as well as explores the lines between life and death, sanity vs. insanity, and the journey to find oneself.

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## **Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says**

### **4.5 harrowing stars to Crux: A Cross-Border Memoir! ?? ?? ?? ?? .5**

In Crux, Jean Guerrero, an investigative reporter, writes about her search for her father, Marco Antonio, a search in the figurative and literal senses, as she seeks understanding while also trying to pinpoint why he is on the run and where he is.

Marco is gifted at creating and engineering, all self-taught, and he meets Guerrero's mother, when she is just out of medical school. Marco says he has special powers, that he is a shaman and can talk to animals, and it turns out, others in his lineage also had powers. However, Marco has difficulty with paranoia and thinks that the CIA wants to control his mind. He also uses drugs and alcohol to excess at times.

Guerrero, the reporter that she is, researches reasons for Marco's behavior, other than possible schizophrenia. More than anything, she wants to understand her father. Traveling through Mexico, she interviews family and that is when she discovers that others in her father's family background were mystics. Guerrero ends up taking some risks herself while on this journey, traveling through dangerous places and experimenting with those same things that tempt her father. She puts everything she has on the line, including her life, in her quest for answers.

Guerrero's writing is exquisite, and while the format of the narrative jumps around in time somewhat, I did not mind because the story is so engaging. Her search for her father and the symbolism involved in the title alone gives me pause at all the various meanings. Not only did her father cross actual physical borders (and Guerrero did as well in her search), but he crosses that thin line between reality and disconnection from it.

Overall, Crux is an adventure and an exploration of the relationship between father and daughter. It is powerful, fascinating, enlightening, and begs the question of, in the process of Guerrero desperately seeking to find and understand her father, will she also find herself.

Thank you to Random House for the invitation to read this original memoir. Crux will be published on July 17, 2018.

My reviews can also be found on my blog: [www.jennifertarheelreader.com](http://www.jennifertarheelreader.com)

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## **Lolly K Dandeneau says**

via my blog: <https://bookstalkerblog.wordpress.com/>

'Brains are mystical. They perform alchemy in a place no one can measure. Yet the stories they yield exert as obvious an effect as gravity.'

Jean Guerrero's father was elusive, misunderstood by himself as much as the rest of the people who orbited his life. Born in Mexico, later migrating to California, it is a cross border memoir of not just his physical existence, but of his mind as reality crosses myth. This is a crushingly raw, beautiful love story, in a sense, between father and daughter. "I'm sorry, Papi. Perdóname. I know how much you hate to be pursued. You've spent your whole life running. Now the footsteps chasing you are mine." Marcos owns his own reality of who he was, but who he became is at odds with it. Incredibly gifted with all things mechanical, he houses a brilliant mind that is haunted by his mental illness, if everything he claims isn't true. As he traveled the world and neglected his family, is it really possible that the CIA was performing experiments on him, or was this just a spiral into madness, extreme paranoia? Jean is on a mission to find her father, to understand who he is and to understand his splintered mind. Of course, one must start at the beginning. Her father is much like a mythical being. When he explains about real mind-control experiments that occurred in the 1950's, it's harder for Jean to dismiss the possibility of what he is telling her.

When her parents met, it was as if fate brought them together. Her beautiful mother was a Puerto Rican medical student, her father an magnetic man, his body fit from physical labor, a perfectionist in his welding. In his free time a voracious reader, nothing more important to him than stuffing everything he could fit into his hungry mind, Jeannette is like a gift from the universe, an equally curious mind, a twin soul! He lended his intelligence and strong English-speaking to his step father's business, overseeing things, despite prior issues between them, past abuses. When he met the beautiful Jeannette, he knew she was the one. It wasn't long before their love was cracking under the strain of his suspicious nature, there were signs early on of his illness. Yet, life went on as it does and warnings at the time were easy to dismiss as Jeannette had her career and a family to raise. Jean is born, "Fatherhood gushed purpose through his veins like a drug," but it wouldn't be enough to tame her father. As her mother becomes a popular physician it seems Marco is healed by the birth of their child. Another child, her sister is born in 1989, they move into a home but then there is a betrayal by his half-sister, Amy involving the family business he worked so hard to make a success. Marco breaks, despite his wife's attempts to interest him in other endeavours. Soon, he is no longer the doting father. Unable to find his own purpose, he begins to resent his wife's success, to feel emasculated and begins to use prostitutes, then gets obsessed with creating a garden but like everything else, once he has exhausted his passions, he collapses into himself. His adoration turns to contempt for his daughter, family. Life darkens, and his angry eruptions lead her mother to kick him out by the time Jean is 6. So begins the disappearing of her father. With her medical knowledge, Jean's mother knows it has to be 'schizophrenia.' Drug usage, escape through travel, her father is no longer the loving Papi who used to film his family's every precious moment, in his own creative vision.

His absence is a wound, a dark hole she will spend years trying to fill, even emulating her dad, wondering if she too is suffering his affliction. She becomes a journalist, and this is the skill she will use to excavate her father and his family history, one rich with mystics, such as her grandmother who may have been a healer, or a witch. Exploring the madness, myths and truths of her father and his past she wants to regain possession of the man he once was, to atone in a sense for the wrongs he committed, to salvage the cracks in his mind and discover if there is truth in his ravings. What caused the split in his thinking, what are the voices he hears,

where are the really coming from? This has been the year of beautiful, raw memoirs and *Crux* is another gem. How do we measure ourselves and each other, how do we steady ourselves as life, the world rushes us? How does a child come to terms with the embarrassment, resentment, fear, love, hope and cope with the crushing weight of loving someone who is a phantom? How can Jean extract the traces of poisonous anger she feels towards her Papi? In order to understand Marco, she has to enter the realm of his reality, to honor him by turning away from the protestations of logic and give his vision a voice. I was deeply moved by the idea, because the minute someone is labeled with mental illness or a disability of any sort, people dismiss their humanity. Everything they think and say is suddenly suspect, or without merit. Why do we do that? Is it some sort of deflection, self-preservation? The thought process seems to be, “if I can see the sense in something that ‘crazy person’ says than I am not of sound mind”, there is cruelty in that, isn’t there? It robs people of their humanity. It’s easier to make them a non-person, isn’t it? Until that changes, we will never understand how to move forward, never be able to help people heal.

The American way is to trust in logic and science, to scoff at all things mystical or spiritual. Her father’s culture marries religion and superstition, with its beautiful myths and history. How is a man between two worlds meant to anchor himself in life? How is his daughter Jean meant to make sense of her own existence, to plant herself, make roots that honor both cultures and to make peace with her father? This is a fascinating journey, a gut wrenching memoir that manages to reach for light, hope. It is one of the most unusual memoirs I’ve read in years. Yes, add it to your TBR list.

Publication Date: July 17, 2018

Random House Publishing

One World

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