



## The Hunter: Awakening

**Nicholas Arriaza**

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*The Hunter is a smart, merciless novel that lets the ghosts of the distant past haunt modern Los Angeles's seedy underbelly.*

Deep in the hills of Los Angeles, a secret has lurked for centuries—and when it is unleashed, it will change the valley forever. *The Hunter*, Nicholas Arriaza's incredible new thriller, knits together medieval and Mayan history, Catholic conspiracies, saints, and modern California in a terrific, breathless story. With vibrant, spine-tingling imagery and strong characters, Arriaza establishes himself as a writer to watch in the thriller genre.

Long ago, a Roman soldier converted to Christianity because of a vision of Jesus that appeared between a stag's antlers. A cult dedicated to his memory—the Knights Prosperitas—sprang up in Spain and came to Guatemala with the conquistadores.

However, instead of protecting and aiding the people, they “helped the Inquisition dispose of those marked as heretics, witches, and werewolves.” They disappeared without a trace—until a hiker discovered their hidden cathedral and the magic contained there.

Now, a young doctor named Melisa, her fiancé, Chris, and a handful of others are pulled into the conspiracy of the cave. What has been awakened? And what is the mysterious beast that seems to be hunting everyone its legend touches?

Arriaza draws heavily on historical and spiritual themes, which adds a wonderful, spooky element to this pulse-pounding novel. By juxtaposing modern California with its superstitious origins, Arriaza heightens the suspense—and when the two worlds collide, the action is thrilling.

Arriaza raises the stakes by keeping his modern characters in the dark. Melisa, in particular, is a standout character. A few months pregnant and just beginning to show, she's the first to encounter the cave's inhabitant: “Head to toe, his body is covered in dried mud, with blood running brightly down the hardened surface. His clothes are mere strips, barely covering his body.”

The mangled mess is taken to the ER, but Melisa, a neurosurgeon, isn't content to let well enough alone. Her curiosity drives the story forward. Arriaza's slow reveal is tantalizing and keeps the tension running high.

Soon, Melisa must learn who she can trust—and who would lead the Hunter to her for their own purposes. The Hunter's ancient evil adds dimension to the story and takes on a history of its own: “Their father would tell them horror stories about the Hunter. How he had no mercy. No feelings for anyone or anything. A butcher born of hate and savagery.” It is a worthy bogeyman for a terrific story.

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