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Off the Bookshelf

BY ANNA HANKS

Anonymous Rex

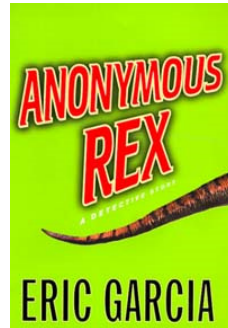
A Detective Story

by Eric Garcia

Villard, 276 pp., \$23

Anonymous Rex leaps out of its gumshoe formula fast enough to break the genre barrier. Imagine a hard-boiled detective novel crossed with magical realism. Think film noir with great special effects. Think fabulous read. Vincent Rubio is a down-on-his-luck dinosaur detective in modern-day America. His partner was recently killed, he's maxed out his credit cards, and he's been hitting the basil pretty hard these days. And when we say dinosaur, we mean din-o-saur. As in velociraptor, T. rex, etc. Rubio is part of an underground dinosaur subculture that lives side by side with humans. According to the premise, dinos didn't die out 65 million years ago, they just went underground, shrinking in size to human proportions and garbing themselves in clever human suits. With the introduction of detective Rubio, Eric Garcia has constructed a full-blown dino world with dino mobsters, dino night clubs, dino hospital wards, and herbal dino drug additions. Well paced, well plotted, and charming, *Anonymous Rex* is a gem of modern detective fiction.

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