

PRESS KIT

IN OUR SECRET LIFE

A Novel

A. TONY MENDOZA

A love story. An art heist. A secret worth \$160 million.

On sale October 27, 2026 · Sly Dog Press, El Paso, Texas

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Quick facts

Title	<i>In Our Secret Life: A Novel</i>
Author	A. Tony Mendoza
Publisher	Sly Dog Press, El Paso, Texas
On sale	October 27, 2026 (hardcover and ebook) · June 1, 2027 (trade paperback)
Hardcover	ISBN 979-8-9969706-1-2 · \$34.99 · 390 pages · 6 × 9 in, jacketed
Ebook	ISBN 979-8-9969706-3-6 · \$9.99
Trade paperback	ISBN 979-8-9969706-0-5 · \$18.99
Genre	Historical fiction / Crime fiction (BISAC FIC014000, FIC050000)
Audience	Adult; book clubs. Includes a reading group guide
LCCN	2026925627
Distribution	Ingram. Available to bookstores and libraries at standard trade terms
Available from	Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org and independent bookstores

About the book

Nobody suspects the schoolteachers. You wouldn't have either.

In 1955, Jerry and Rita Adler meet in the Catskills: two pickpockets who know their own kind on sight. Recognition becomes a pact, and the pact becomes a marriage: fifty-seven years, two children, a hundred countries, and a life no teacher's salary could ever explain. Of everything they ever took, only one thing stayed: a woman in ochre, behind their bedroom door for more than thirty years.

Rita tells the story herself, moving backward from her final days, as the illness taking her memory threatens the secret she guarded her whole life. The mind that hid everything is now trying to give it away.

Inspired by the real 1985 theft of Willem de Kooning's *Woman-Ochre*, the novel does not solve the case. It imagines the marriage behind it. Jerry and Rita Adler are fictional characters.

The true story behind the novel

On November 29, 1985, the day after Thanksgiving, a man and a woman walked into the University of Arizona Museum of Art in Tucson. While the woman distracted a guard, the man cut Willem de Kooning's *Woman-Ochre* from its frame. They were gone in under fifteen minutes. The painting vanished for thirty-two years.

In August 2017, antique dealers in Silver City, New Mexico, bought the contents of a retired couple's estate. Behind a bedroom door hung the missing de Kooning, valued by then at as much as \$160 million. The dealers returned it to the university. After conservation at the Getty, it went on view in Los Angeles in the summer of 2022 and came home to Tucson that fall.

No one was ever charged. The theft remains officially unsolved.

Fact and fiction. *In Our Secret Life* is a novel. Jerry and Rita Adler are invented characters, not portraits of real people. The author's note in the book sets out where the documented record ends and the imagined story begins.

About the author

SHORT BIO

A. Tony Mendoza is an El Paso entrepreneur, publisher and editor who started his first business at nineteen. He published an El Paso business newspaper and was named the U.S. Small Business Administration's Young Entrepreneur of the Year. *In Our Secret Life* is his first novel.

LONG BIO

A. Tony Mendoza started his first business at nineteen and has spent his career as an entrepreneur, publisher and editor in El Paso, Texas. He was publisher and editor of an El Paso business newspaper and spent fifteen years building and publishing specialty directories. The U.S. Small Business Administration named him its Young Entrepreneur of the Year, and the following year its Small Business Media Advocate of the Year.

For the past six years he has been the primary caregiver for his father, Anastacio "Tacho" Mendoza Sr., the 1955 Texas State Golden Gloves champion, who lives with Alzheimer's disease. That experience shaped Rita, the narrator of *In Our Secret Life*, whose memory is slipping away even as she fights to hold on to the story of her marriage. The novel is dedicated to his father.

Mendoza designed the book's cover himself and wrote "In Our Secret Life," an original song created for the novel, with a music video. He lives in El Paso.

Story ideas for journalists and producers

The heist nobody could explain. A \$160 million painting hung in a quiet couple's bedroom for three decades. A novelist asks the question every reporter asked in 2017: how does an ordinary life hide something that big?

A caregiver's novel about memory. An El Paso son caring for his father with Alzheimer's wrote a love story narrated by a woman losing her memory. For health, aging and caregiver coverage, and Alzheimer's awareness programming.

A Southwest mystery, retold. The theft happened in Tucson. The painting surfaced in Silver City, New Mexico. For Arizona, New Mexico and West Texas outlets, a regional story with a new chapter.

El Paso entrepreneur turns novelist. A longtime El Paso publisher and SBA Young Entrepreneur of the Year publishes his first novel through his own press.

A father, a Golden Gloves title and a dedication. The novel is dedicated to Anastacio "Tacho" Mendoza Sr., the 1955 Texas State Golden Gloves champion. For sports-history and community features.

A love story for readers over 50. Fifty-seven years of marriage, told by the woman who lived it. For book-club, lifestyle and senior-living outlets.

Interviews, review copies and contact

Media contact	A. Tony Mendoza
Email	press@inoursecretlife.com
Press kit	inoursecretlife.com/press
Interviews	Print, radio, television and podcast: in person in El Paso and the Southwest, by phone or video nationwide
Review copies	Print and digital, on request to journalists, reviewers, podcasters and booksellers
Response time	Media inquiries answered within 24 hours

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact: A. Tony Mendoza · press@inoursecretlife.com

A \$160 Million Painting Hung Behind Their Bedroom Door for 32 Years. An El Paso Novelist Imagines the Marriage That Kept the Secret.

In Our Secret Life, a novel inspired by the 1985 theft of Willem de Kooning's *Woman-Ochre*, arrives October 27

EL PASO, Texas — October 5, 2026 — On the day after Thanksgiving in 1985, a man and a woman walked into the University of Arizona Museum of Art in Tucson, cut Willem de Kooning's *Woman-Ochre* from its frame and walked out in under fifteen minutes. Thirty-two years later, the painting turned up behind a bedroom door in a quiet couple's home in New Mexico, valued at as much as \$160 million. No one was ever charged.

El Paso author A. Tony Mendoza asks the question that case left behind: what kind of marriage keeps a secret like that? His debut novel, *In Our Secret Life* (Sly Dog Press), goes on sale October 27, 2026, in hardcover and ebook.

The novel follows Jerry and Rita Adler, two pickpockets who meet in the Catskills in 1955 and build a fifty-seven-year marriage around a hidden life: two careers teaching school, travels to a hundred countries, and a life no teacher's salary could ever explain. Of everything they ever took, only one thing stayed: a woman in ochre, behind their bedroom door for more than thirty years.

Rita tells the story herself, moving backward from her final days as the illness taking her memory threatens the secret she guarded her whole life.

"Everyone who read the headlines in 2017 asked the same thing: how could two ordinary people live with that painting for thirty years?" said Mendoza. "I wanted to write the marriage, not the crime. The theft is the hook. Jerry and Rita are the story."

For six years, Mendoza has been the primary caregiver for his father, Anastacio "Tacho" Mendoza Sr., a 1955 Texas State Golden Gloves champion who lives with Alzheimer's disease. That experience shaped Rita's voice. The book is dedicated to his father.

In Our Secret Life is a work of fiction. Jerry and Rita Adler are invented characters, and the novel does not claim to solve the real case. An author's note sets out where the documented record ends and the story begins. The book includes a reading group guide.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A. Tony Mendoza is an El Paso entrepreneur, publisher and editor who started his first business at nineteen. He published an El Paso business newspaper and was named the U.S. Small Business Administration's Young Entrepreneur of the Year. *In Our Secret Life* is his first novel.

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Review copies, author photos and interviews are available on request. Press kit: inoursecretlife.com/press

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