



# I Was the President's Mistress!!

A Novel

By Miguel Syjuco

"This brilliant black comedy is a wild, and wildly unpredictable, ride through the dark side of the Philippines. Miguel Syjuco is his country's most original and unflinching literary voice."

—Salman Rushdie, author of *Quichotte*

"Nobody writes like Miguel Syjuco. A triumph." —Elif Batuman, author of *The Idiot*

FSG is proud to announce the publication of *I Was the President's Mistress!!* (on sale April 5, 2022) by Miguel Syjuco. The winner of the Man Asian Literary Prize for *Illustrado*, Syjuco has written an audacious and thrilling second novel, an unflinching satire about power, corruption, sex, and all the other topics you were told never to discuss in polite company.

First came the Sexy-Sexygate scandal. Then an impeachment trial. Finally, a battle royale for the presidency. At the center of this political typhoon is Vita Nova, the most famous movie star in the Philippines and a former paramour of the country's most powerful man. Now, for the first time ever, she bares herself completely in a tell-all memoir that puts the *sensational* in *sensationalistic*.

The setting: a sweating, heaving country. The time: right now. The plot: a drug war rages, an assassin brandishes a pistol, a damsel rises from ashes to power, and a government teeters on the brink. Among the players: a dreamer who boxed and acted his way to the presidency, his Koran-toting nemesis in the senate, a horny bishop, a cowboy turned warlord, a poor little rich boy dying with his dynasty, a washed-up reporter redeemed by one last scoop, a high-school sweetheart driven mad by decades of disappointment, and an American naval officer tempting our heroine with a way out. As Vita warns, viewer discretion is advised.

In this masterful novel, Miguel Syjuco's signature style—hilarious, insightful, playful, provocative—animates thirteen indelible voices whose stories present a cross-section of a complicated society. *I Was the President's Mistress!!* hurtles headlong into love, politics, faith, history, memory, and the ongoing war over who will tell the stories the world shall know as truth.

**Miguel Syjuco** is a Filipino author, journalist, civil society advocate, and professor at New York University Abu Dhabi. His debut novel, *Illustrado*, was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year and won both the Man Asian Literary Prize and the Grand Prize at the Palanca Awards, his country's top literary honor. He has worked as a contributing opinion writer for *The International New York Times*, written for many of the world's most respected publications, and spoken on Philippine politics and culture at the World Forum for Democracy and the World Economic Forum. He currently serves on the advisory councils of the Civitella Ranieri Foundation, an international arts residency program, and the Resilience Fund, a project by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime to empower communities most threatened by criminality.

*I Was the President's Mistress!!*, by Miguel Syjuco, will be published in hardcover by Farrar, Straus and Giroux on April 5, 2022 (ISBN: 978-0-374-17405-7; \$30.00). For more information, please contact Lauren Roberts at [lauren.roberts@fsgbooks.com](mailto:lauren.roberts@fsgbooks.com).

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**More Advance Praise for *I Was the President's Mistress!!* by Miguel Syjuco**

**\* Featured in The New York Times \* One of The Millions's Most Anticipated Books of 2022 \***

“Syjuco’s second novel does more than consider Vita a paramour: She’s at the center of stories the country tells itself about religion, relationships, journalism, and politics . . . ***[I Was the President's Mistress!!]* has a headlong, assertive energy and a transgressive bent** . . . Over the course of the novel, shifts in the political atmosphere—up to and including assassination—wind up putting Vita closer to the country’s destiny than she had expected . . . **Syjuco’s most irreverent set pieces reveal how cultures can get a woman like Vita exactly backward—rather than the know-nothing sinner she’s dismissed as, she’s the scapegoat for everyone else’s greed and ineptitude. An ingenious . . . yarn about scandal-struck society.**” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“A super-typhoon of a novel. A Babel of rogues, survivors, and shape-shifters. A polemic against corruption and greed. A sassy, swerving miniseries, touched by grace and beauty. A Filipino *Bonfire of the Vanities* for our beleaguered times. An uncompromising work of art.” —**David Mitchell, author of *Utopia Avenue***

“A tour de force—bawdy, fearless, insightful, delightful.” —**Kamila Shamsie, author of *Home Fire***

“*I Was the President's Mistress!!* is a tour de force. The virtuosic, kinetically funny Miguel Syjuco can riff on just about anything—from celebrity gossip to internet troll farms, pop music to the Philippine electoral circus—as he explores our era’s thorniest questions of class, gender, power, and violence. At the heart of this blistering satire is Vita Nova, a heroine for the ages, whose rise to fame and epic romantic odyssey stop the breath and stoke the conscience like nothing else I’ve ever read.” —**Mia Alvar, author of *In the Country***

“An urgent book, and a necessary one: a *Tyrants Destroyed* for the twenty-first century.”  
—**Tom McCarthy, author of *The Making of Incarnation***