



## City of Hate

**Timothy S. Miller**

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Timothy S. Miller's *City of Hate* is a dark thriller featuring overlapping conspiracies.

Hal is a recovering alcoholic whose viewpoint is melancholic. His best friend, Lemon, is a conspiracy theorist who sees nefarious plots lurking behind every action. These two loners are thrown into a major maelstrom after a mutual friend is found dead, a sleazy private eye winds up murdered, and a conservative Texas politician is blackmailed with a series of salacious photographs.

The novel begins in media res, and Hal is something of an unreliable narrator. He delivers a running commentary on subjects including phone sex and the filthiness of Lemon's living conditions. His staccato style, with its brutish, proletarian language, results in dirty realism, which is balanced by the text's moments of magical realism, including the random appearance of the image of the Virgin Mary underneath a Dallas highway underpass.

Hal is also a bumbling investigator, which has both a lot to do with the fact that he is a suspect for most of the novel and because he's not a real detective. Still, his dedication and life on the fringe leads to a story that does not play by the rules. The conspiracy's true shape is concealed until the book's end, when the interconnected deaths, and their attachment to the blackmail scheme, are revealed in full. The conclusion is madcap; supernaturalism mixes with reality as Hal manages to find a kind of religious transcendence out of the web of death.

Mature themes, including sex and death, are handled in a frank manner and alongside more than a few four-letter words. Blood is spattered throughout the tale, whose characters are gruff, their means of speaking and dealing with tough situations unabashed.

*City of Hate* is a bizarre and beautiful crime novel about conspiracies and political malevolence.

BENJAMIN WELTON (May / June 2020)

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