

Pacific State: The Sundown Series: Book Two

Grant Price

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Grant Price's cyberpunk thriller *Pacific State* follows a revenge assassination scheme in future-set, corporation-dominated Berlin, where skyscrapers loom over a devastated environment.

Mia is a crusading mercenary; Owen is a former radical who became a suit. Mia enlists Owen's help for a high-stakes mission: she aims to take out a sadistic businessman, Luc, who operates on girls with no anesthetic despite not being a surgeon. He killed one patient, leading the deceased's mother to place a bounty on him. But Luc is also heir to Habanik Entertainment, a powerful corporation whose offerings include an immersive reality suite in which citizens can murder each other "for a nominal fee." It bankrolls the police and surrounds Luc with bodyguards, making him a dangerous target.

Set against a backdrop of climate carnage and unchecked corporate power, the book excels at worldbuilding, dropping evocative hints at the full scope of its dystopia. It's peppered with slang references to foodstuffs, new technology, and organized crime that pique interest in its wider world. It mixes oracular pronouncements with striking descriptions in prose that is stylish and sometimes beautiful, as when a building is described as having a "dreadnought silhouette" that creates "a negative space in an overcast sky," or with notes about "sodium-lit streets" and a "spit-shined moon hung up on display." And Mia tangles with drones and shady underworld figures while planning Luc's assassination, leading to frequent adrenaline-packed action scenes, as when she jumps off a hyperscraper to escape.

Setting up the next series installment well, the electrifying science fiction novel *Pacific State* follows a revenge mission against a powerful businessman.

JOSEPH S. PETE (January / February 2024)

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