



The Dishwasher

Stéphane Larue

Pablo Strauss, Translator

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Stéphane Larue's debut *The Dishwasher* is a precision piece of youthful omphaloskepsis and urban fatigue. Its crisp narration and nearly journalistic aplomb with detailing the addictive spiral of its protagonist make it compelling.

The novel opens with Stéphane meeting an old friend, Bébert, late at night outside of his apartment building. They agree to get a drink for old time's sake.

This scene serves as the first part of a frame for the narrative. The story shifts to Stéphane struggling with a gambling addiction. He steals money from jobs, moves out of his apartment in secret, and borrows money from his cousin with the promise to get his life together. This is when he gets his dishwashing job.

Straightforward, effective prose moves the book on its course. Stéphane's struggle with his addiction is visceral. A dizzying combination of scents from the kitchen is ripely detailed. Despite Stéphane's questionable choices, it becomes hard not to sympathize with his situation.

A perfectly crafted story of desperation and growth, the narrator's conquest of his gambling addiction ebbs and flows, marked by success and failure, hope and defeat. The end returns to the present, wherein Stéphane has supposedly conquered his problem—a positive conclusion that is a welcome respite from the bleak situations that precede it.

The book is captivating in large part because of its characters. Stéphane, Bébert, and the other kitchen workers are dynamic and realistic, if at first they are defined by Stéphane according to singular qualities. They grow regardless; much like the always changing atmosphere of the kitchen, they never sit and stagnate.

The Dishwasher is a thoughtful examination of a young man at the end of his options—a humanizing, emotive, and entertaining tale of personal growth.

SHANA CREANEY (July/August 2019)

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