



## The Endless Mile

**Andrew C. F. Horlick**

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*The Endless Mile is a compelling novel set in the world of horse racing.*

Andrew C. F. Horlick's thriller *The Endless Mile* is set in the high stakes world of harness horse racing, where winning and losing could be the difference between life and death.

Bucky grew up raising and driving horses on his family farm. As the farm's finances dwindle, Bucky begins to establish himself in more important races with bigger payouts. But the higher that Bucky climbs, the deeper the corruption runs, and there are fixers and mobsters who will do anything to keep their pockets lined with Bucky's money. Distracting him further is his childhood sweetheart, Anna, who is finally returning some of his romantic advances, though she's also married to Bucky's best friend Cole.

Bucky's earnest and emotional inner monologue is rich in self-reflection and self-pity, extending to the disparity between his economic situation and that of Anna and her husband. Explorations of class dynamics abound, and the love triangle with Anna is tense and exciting. Childhood friendships are also tested and explored, and conversations between Cole and Bucky are awkward and realistic. Within Bucky's story, though, Anna sometimes functions less like a person than as a trophy to be won, and years of mutual resentment sour relationship dynamics.

Characters often fall into tropes. There's a hard-living, unreliable uncle and a naive, farm-raised father here. New York mobsters have humorous nicknames. Most characters have distinctive voices, though, and conversations flow with realism, even if they rely on stark character contrasts—between Bucky's innocence and his uncle's criminality, for example.

The conflict is believable, as is Bucky's anxiety as he faces poverty and threats to his family. The narrative switches perspectives at times to focus on characters other than Bucky, but does so with clarity. Continuous conflict keeps the story moving.

Scenes are set in a way that engages the senses, bringing to life the horse farm and what it's like working on it, or capturing the smells of spring and the way that daylight hits the racetrack. Descriptions of races and tending to horses are expertly detailed and employ terminology in a fluid way. A surprising ending leaves some characters' fates in the air, but solidifies Bucky's evolution and personal growth.

*The Endless Mile* is a compelling novel set in the world of horse racing whose familiar characters face interesting choices.

DELIA STANLEY (May 9, 2019)

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