



The New York Sour

Marvin Koyo

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New York City breathes through the gritty pages of this contemporary crime novel.

In Marvin Koyo's contemporary crime novel *The New York Sour*, a family is forced to confront its demons.

This New York sequel focuses on the wide Bracho family, especially on members Danielle, Eddie, Felicia, and Victoria, all of whom enjoy the common American pastimes of bingewatching Netflix and engaging in gossip. They also inhabit New York's immigrant milieu; their closest friends are Latino and African immigrants.

When the Brachos aren't joking with each other using the foulest language possible, they help to operate a repair shop, which, at the novel's beginning, is facing the middle part of a major recession. Along with their struggling business, the Brachos force Eddie and his cousin Felicia to become private investigators following the death of a family member. The investigation takes Eddie and Felicia deep into the underbelly of New York's gangster economy.

The murder involves crime syndicates in New York, but the book's approach to these is unsurprising. Eddie and Felicia, despite being novice investigators, manage to find the guilty party using a combination of street smarts and intelligence. Tough-talking thugs, warring parties, and the awful nexus of drugs and violence all make their appearance, but in predictable ways.

Realistic setting details include the stench of New York's sewers and mentions of the city's cynicism. The time period is established through credible mentions of WhatsApp and various other social media platforms; characters talk and interact like twenty-first century urbanites. Manhattan's criminal class is addressed in ways that conform to tropes: its gangsters are influenced by pop culture and display a fondness for four-letter words. Some passages appear in bold text to highlight their importance, though many such sentences prove unimportant; their ultimate impact is misdirection and confusion.

The text is dialogue heavy, and its short chapters tend to open with discussions between characters. These conversations are banter-laden, variously predictable and silly. Eddie and Felicia ask a lot of questions as they try to find the murderer; their many suspects talk at length about their lives and backstories. All of this talking obscures the central murder investigation, especially because exchanges are saturated by short putdowns and jokes. The story's conclusion points to a follow-up, but is jarring, featuring an inexplicable act of explosive violence that complicates everything.

Though it begins with a murder, *The New York Sour* is most concerned with the personalities of New York's young urbanites.

BENJAMIN WELTON (February 3, 2020)

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