



The Slush Pile Brigade

Samuel Marquis

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This high-energy, rollicking misadventure will change the way you look at the publishing industry forever.

Calling themselves the Slush Pile Brigade as a nod to the unsolicited writings sent to publishing houses, four friends take on the publishing industry and get caught up in dangerous events beyond their control in Samuel Marquis's *The Slush Pile Brigade*.

When fledgling Colorado writer Nick Lassiter discovers the manuscript for his novel has been purloined by one of the world's most prolific authors, he and his three best friends set off to New York City for a confrontation and an apology. They get more than they bargained for in this high-energy misadventure that involves a cutthroat literary agent, Russian mobsters, an estranged father, espionage and intrigue, and a long-lost love.

The characters—especially the brooding and moneyed Anton De Benedictis, the calmly homicidal Alexei Popov, and Lassiter's over-the-top buddies—leap off the page as fully fleshed out individuals. Personal backstories are presented for several of the main characters, including Nick; his father, the CIA operative Austin Brewbaker; Nick's ex-girlfriend, Natalie Perkins, who does more than work as a literary agent; the best-selling and troubled Australian author Cameron Beckett; and Benedictis, who rose from one of New York City's harshest neighborhoods to become rich and famous in his own right, only to discover himself in bed with the wrong people.

Marquis finds a way to incorporate historical nuggets, about locales such as Central Park or famous people like Buffalo Bill Cody, into this entertaining and fast-paced story, which unfolds over five days in early June. The apology Nick seeks becomes secondary to outside factors that come into play during this time frame, which is jam-packed with seemingly non-stop action. It makes for a sometimes unbelievable, but very enjoyable, ride.

The plot—complete with car chases and the requisite gun play—is unpredictable and sometimes turns violent; twists and turns and countertwists abound. So, too, does the humor. Numerous references to classic movies, songs, and literature are sprinkled throughout, as well as a very steady stream of expletives that could potentially offend.

The dialogue is superb, especially the rat-a-tat round robin responses given when the Slush Pile Brigade members are in discussion. For example, Squelch ruminates on his friend's second chance at love: "Nicky's not still looking for that blue jean, baby queen, prettiest girl he's ever seen. He's already found her, and Natalie's found her soul mate too. Hey kids, rock and roll, rock on!" And Claggebart responds, "The great Lothario has spoken. Who needs Sartre, Gandhi, or David Essex when you've got Squelch?"

This literary adventure is distracted only by a couple homophone mix-ups and the occasional lack of a correct comma.

Be prepared to never look at the publishing world in the same way again.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (August 14, 2015)

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